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The WRONGS of INDIAN WOMANHOOD

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ONLY A GIRL

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The Wrongs of In[illegible]
Wo[illegible]

BY

MRS. MARCUS P. [illegible]

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WITH AN INTRO[illegible]

PANDITA [illegible]

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The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood

BY

MRS. MARCUS B. FULLER

BOMBAY, INDIA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

PANDITA RAMABAI

NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

Publishers of Evangelical Literature

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TO

The Christian women of India, England and America who owe all they have and all they are to our Lord Jesus Christ in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, *there is neither male nor female,*" but in whom all are one, is this volume lovingly dedicated.

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Contents

CHAP.		PAGE
	Introduction by Ramabai	11
	Author's Preface	15
I.	How Long?	17
II.	A Snap-shot at Modern India	23
III.	Child-Marriage	33
IV.	Enforced Widowhood	48
V.	The Zenana	76
VI.	Muralis	100
VII.	Devadasis	112
VIII.	Nautch-Girl	126
IX.	An Anti-Nautch Movement	137
X.	Infanticide	148
XI.	A Chapter of Indian Testimony	161
XII.	The Position of Government	175
XIII.	What Government Has Done	189
XIV.	What the Reformers Have Done	211
XV.	Since 1891	229
XVI.	What the Missionaries Have Done	247
XVII.	The Real Difficulty	270
XVIII.	The Real Remedy	284

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List of Illustrations

		PAGE
ONLY A GIRL		*Frontispiece*
HINDU HOME LIFE—GRINDING	*Facing*	26
HINDU HOME LIFE—SPINNING		
HINDU GENTLEMAN AND GIRL WIFE	"	39
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET MARRIED?		
SUTTEE RITE (BURNING THE DEAD)		51
PORTRAIT OF RAMABAI	"	68
GROUP OF CHILD WIDOWS		
HINDU TEMPLES	"	113
WORSHIPING THE IDOL		
NAUTCH GIRLS	"	128
AN ELDERLY WIDOW		
BOMBAY COLLEGE		206
LUCKNOW COLLEGE		263
READING OF THE SHASTRAS		273
A HIGH CASTE GIRL	"	285
A LOW CASTE WOMAN		
A GOSPEL WAGON		291

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Introduction

It is a matter of deep thankfulness to me that Mrs. Fuller is publishing her articles on "The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood" in a book. The world needs such books to enlighten it. Very few people, even in India itself, know what really goes on behind the *purdah*. Hundreds of our Indian reformers are ignorant of the real condition of women. The Indian women themselves do not realize the depths of degradation they are in. Even those who have suffered the greatest wrongs are reluctant to tell the truth to the world, even if they have the opportunity, for fear they may lower themselves and their nation in the eyes of other nations. A young widow was telling me some of the hardships she and other widows had to fear. Another young widow heard what she said to me and, when the talk was over, the latter took the former aside and gave her a severe scolding for betraying her family and her nation at large!

Great courage is required to tell the truth when you know all the nation will rise against you as

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one man and put you down. So no one need be surprised at the reluctance of India's women to tell their own wrongs, even if they knew how. It is for this reason I am more than glad that God has put it into Mrs. Fuller's mind to place before the world the woes of India's women in a way that no one before has done. She has taken the greatest pains to find out the truth on every point she has written down. She has neither exaggerated nor kept back what can be said on the most important things connected with Indian women's conditions. All who are interested in and want to do something for the salvation of woman in India will do well to read her book.

I entirely agree with Mrs. Fuller in what she says on "The Real Remedy." Let me ask you, my dear Christian sisters, the same question that she has put to you. "Is it possible for the one hundred and fifty million women of India of this generation to hear the gospel?" Will you not wake up to your Christian duty and say, Yes; and then act upon your convictions? I believe there are at least half a million Christian women of all castes and colors in India. If each one of them made up her mind to tell the story of Christ to one of her sister women every day, taking the seventh day for rest, she would be

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able to preach the gospel to over three hundred women in one year. In this way it is possible for half a million Christian women to give the gospel to all of our sisters in India in *one year*. I am praying to God that He may send a flood of the Holy Spirit on the Christian women of India and convict them of their *sin* of not giving the gospel to their heathen sisters whenever they can. The Lord has given us the command, *Go and preach the gospel.* Shall we not be a host under His leadership to publish it far and wide? Dear Christian sisters of all lands, do consider this most important question and rise to obey the command of your great Captain, Jesus Christ, who expects you to do His bidding and to enter into His joy.

May this little book be like the voice in the wilderness, and be the means of turning thousands of minds to obey the Master's call and take the Real Remedy, the gospel of Christ, to millions of India's women to heal the deep wounds of their hearts, is the prayer of your sister,

Mukti Mission, Kedgaon,
August 20th, 1899.

Ramabai

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Author's Preface

An apparently trivial event often proves the pivot on which something greater and unthought of may turn. Last year I paid to a friend out of the city a hurried visit—an insignificant event in itself, but, while there, an Indian lady gave me a manuscript to look over and asked my opinion of it. I was deeply stirred as I read it, and for days I was haunted with the query: "Can I do anything for the cause of Indian womanhood?" It has been many years since the subject of Indian women's wrongs has been much before the public, and then the public is so forgetful, that I finally decided to write three or four articles for the *Bombay Guardian* on the subject. Without any definite planning one article led to another, until I had written eighteen instead of three or four!

They were written under the pressure of other work and responsibilities. Kind friends expressed much interest in them, and urged me to publish them in a more permanent form. I have taken great pains to verify all my statements,

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and have often understated facts rather than lay myself open to the charge of exaggeration. European writers are accused of not understanding Indian thought and custom. To avoid this charge I procured my information largely from Indian sources. This has laid me under a debt of gratitude to a host of Indian friends, both Hindu and Christian. But I am especially indebted to my friends, Professor N. G. Velinkar, who has been most generous and unwearying in his assistance, and Ramabai, whose counsel and sympathy have been of great value.

It is true that my scenes, incidents and illustrations may have given a *slight* Marathi coloring to some of the chapters. This is due to the fact that I have spent many years in the Marathi country, but this does not hinder the book from representing the whole of India, and calls for no apology.

After careful revision of the articles, I send them forth in their present form to, I trust, a larger audience, with the hope that, in spite of all defects, my readers may catch the message they contain, and which my heart has burned to give.

JENNY FULLER.

Bombay, India,
Sept. 1, 1899.

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I

HOW LONG?

FOR four hundred years Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines bore the iron yoke of Spanish misrule and priestly oppression. For years the inhabitants have revolted, and these fair islands have known nothing but rebellion and suffering in their vain attempts to throw off this galling oppression.

Days went by, moons waxed and waned, but the suffering remained as real and deliverance seemed as far off as ever. Men saw their homes destroyed, loved ones wronged, starved and killed. Would freedom never come? Was Cuba Libré an idle dream and jest?

It was February 15th, 1898. The day had dawned like other days; and was filled with woe and suffering as other days had been. There seemed no end to such days. Hope had almost died in many hearts. Out in the bay of Havana an American war ship lay riding at anchor. The waters of the bay lapped and curled against its sides as idly as at other times. Suddenly there was an awful explosion, and the *Maine* had gone

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down a total wreck. Again the waters of the bay lapped and curled, but this time above the grave of over two hundred men.

This disaster, sudden and awful, was the cloud "no bigger than a man's hand" that rose that day, the forerunner of the heavy war cloud that soon hung over the islands; and when it broke away, the brilliant "bow of promise" of freedom spanned its dark shadows.

It was an awful disaster, but it set in motion forces that broke forever the yoke of oppression that had so long rested upon the necks of the people. The world, now that the strain of sympathy is broken, says they are not ready for freedom and are only children. Their right was freedom, and it is our duty to let time work out their problems for them.

What has this story to do with the wrongs of Indian womanhood? Nothing, save that it gave us courage and hope. An Indian lady had given us a manuscript book to read concerning the wrongs of Indian women, saying, "I do not know that it can be published, but I feel these things ought to be known." We thought we had known much before, but this book was like a book of horrors to us. We almost wished we had never read it, and hid our faces to shut out

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the scenes it had depicted. What can be done to help? we repeated over and over.

Child marriage, enforced widowhood, the Zenana, the *Muralis* and the *Devadasis* (temple women) seem to flourish as deeply rooted as ever. Women suffer on just as they have so long done. Only now and then does the public hear an agonized shriek of the sufferings of some child-wife. Now and then, the public reads a paragraph in some paper of the suicide of a girl-widow, with no hint of the tragedy behind it all.

It has not been many years since Rakhmabai made her brave fight for her rights. She won in a way. The law still forbids her to marry; but perhaps her struggles did more for women than we know. The miracle was that she ever had the courage to make it at all.

Then came the tragic suffering and death of Phulmani Dasi, in Calcutta, which aroused the public and government, until they raised the age of consent to twelve. The story of Phulmani Dasi[1] is repeated over and over still in the land. The neighbors know it, educated men know it, editors know it; yet there is little public protest.

[1] An adult husband in Calcutta committed rape upon his child-wife, Phulmani Dasi, aged eleven, causing her death.

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If it were in England or America, the whole world would know it. Why are not these facts brought forward until the world is stirred and the evil reformed?

It looks hopeless. It has gone on so many, many years. It was here that the story of the *Maine* came to our minds and spoke courage and hope. It may be that some social *Maine* will come to our help—some social tragedy deeper and more terrible than Phulmani's, or more unjust than Rakhmabai's, that will stir men's hearts and set such forces in action as will in a short time bring to Indian womanhood a glorious deliverance. Men still say that women are not ready or fit for a change; that they are only children; and they never will be aught else in their present position. Make the change and then, better the mistakes of freedom, a thousand times over, than the cruel wrongs of oppression and degradation.

There are hundreds of men in India who feel these questions deeply, who go as far in reform as they dare,—who would nobly stand by any measure that would be brought up, if they were alone. But any action on their part involves a large number of relatives and friends who have not their convictions, but who must share the

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reformer's ostracism and ill-repute. We would not be too hard on them.

Mr. Malabari who has said and written so much on these subjects is a Parsee, and Ramabai a Christian. Both of them can date the beginnings of their interest to sad scenes witnessed in their childhood in their native place. In a sketch of Mr. Malabari the writer tells how he heard the shrieks of a little girl like Phulmani Dasi, and those shrieks still ring in his soul. Ramabai tells how in one part of her father's house when she was but nine years old, there lived a poor family. The family consisted of a man of thirty years of age, his girl-wife of sixteen and his old mother. The mother-in-law was all that is implied by that name in this country, a heartless old hag, always beating, abusing and cruelly treating her daughter-in-law. One day when the girl was spinning, a monkey stole her cotton. For this carelessness the girl was abused by the mother-in-law who nagged the husband on to beat her. Ramabai adds: "I was an eyewitness to all this. Her piercing cries went right to my heart, and I seem to hear them now after nearly thirty years. My childish heart was filled with indignation, and though I was powerless to aid, I have never forgotten that poor girl's cries for

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help, and I suppose it was the first call I received to enter upon the sacred duty of helping my sisters according to the little strength I had. But I never realized the extent of the grief, suffering and need of my sisters, so long as I remained in darkness, and had no love of God in me."

The public so soon forgets, and needs to be reminded so often, that we felt perhaps all we could do was to review these evils one by one, and stir men's hearts afresh to remember the wrongs of Indian womanhood, and perhaps in this way give an added impetus to prayer and effort.

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II

A SNAP SHOT AT MODERN INDIA

THE mail steamer lay at the wharf at Brindisi. As we leaned against the railing of the upper deck, we saw a young Indian gentleman dressed in a bicycle suit trundling his wheel up the plank that reached from the shore to the ship. When we went down to luncheon, we found the steward had seated him at our table. He told us he had been in England for several years pursuing a course of studies, and before coming on ship-board, had just completed a tour of the continent. An indulgent father had supplied him with all the money he had needed without murmuring or question, which had enabled him to live while abroad like a gentleman. Now he was returning home. He had evidently had a royal time.

One afternoon on deck he said to us; "I have written a pamphlet on the freedom of women; when I have published it, I will send you a copy." And as he talked on of his hopes for his sisters, we got a glimpse of how the beautiful English homes he had been in had affected him, and saw that he had felt the influence of refined and cultured

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ladies. He had seen real homes with women reverenced and chivalrously cared for. He had found them educated and interested in all that interested father, brother, or husband: and not only that, but they were treated as companions and were even allowed to advise and help. It had been an enchanting vision to him. We did not wonder that under its spell he had written his pamphlet. It was delightful; but what a wide gulf lay between the vision and the home to which he was returning!

We tried to picture it all. We knew that when our ship entered the harbor, and the tug carried us to the pier, his mother would not be found standing in the crowd on the shore, leaning on his father's arm and trying to catch the first glimpse of her boy among the passengers. Had there followed him all these years the tender weekly letter from his mother? Had there been constant chatty letters from his sisters giving him all the home news, telling of their studies and of the good times they were having, and how interested they were in all he saw and wrote about, and of the plans they had made of all they would do when he got home? Had he carried their pictures, and, when homesick or weary, looked at them with longing eyes? Had

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mother's picture stood on his desk all these years and been an inspiration to study and pure living?

No! he is coming back to his father's house, but not to a home as that is regarded in the Western sense of the word. The front part of the house may be furnished comfortably, even in English style, but it does not contain the apartments of the family, but those of the men and their friends; while the women's apartments are in the rear. There will be no happy family gathering at the first meal. The traveller will not offer his arm to his mother and escort her to the table; and though the son has been gone so long, yet the father will not help mother first to food, and then the sisters before he helps his son. Oh no! but the mother and sisters will stand and wait upon the men until they have finished before they eat.

The mother in her great joy to see her son has no doubt greeted and caressed him, but the sisters, if they have not gone to the homes of their husbands, will stand timidly in the background, and if spoken to, cover their faces with their *sarees*, or else laugh and run away. They ask no questions, as he tells of Paris, Vienna and Dresden; of the pictures and the beautiful scenery he has been privileged to behold. They may be interested in what he has had to eat while away,

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and his descriptions of English ladies and customs. When he opens his boxes, what has he brought them? Dainty souvenirs of his travels and his English home, that will be as treasures to them for years? No; if anything, perhaps some silken fabric for a garment, or a bit of jewelry. That is all Indian women are supposed to care for; nothing else. And the mother, who remembers how he used to cling to her skirts, and how she indulged him in dainty bits of food, and helped to win his way with his father, what is her meed after all these years? Yes, he has appreciated the food she had prepared for him with unusual care; he is well and alive; his reformed ways startle her a little, and she hopes he will not go too far; but there is such a difference between him now, and when he clung to her as a little boy. He lives in another world from hers, and there is little fellowship or aught in common between them. In the evening, the thought of the day comes out as she says to the father: "He must be married soon," and suggests a little girl of ten, the child of a wealthy casteman. It has long been the dream of her heart to see the two families united; and again and again has she sat and, in a kind of day-dream, gone all through the marriage festivities.

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HINDU HOME LIFE—GRINDING

HINDU HOME LIFE—SPINNING

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And the young man himself? What a rough dispelling of all the bright dreams he has had. Iron custom rises before him like a wall. He faces again the joint family system, and the reverence for elders enjoined even if it be at the expense of all personal convictions: then the host of relatives of all degrees of nearness with their families whom he must regard. He has no courage to propose his plans to them. And what will it avail to talk it over at the club, for his sympathizers are all in the same box with himself? Reform looks impossible. With a sigh he lays his manuscript on the freedom of women aside, and we hear the whispered sigh: "*Kyā Karūn*" (What can I do?).

He knows instinctively what plans his mother has for his marriage. He knows he can evade her for a time, but not for long. He desperately declares he will not marry a child. He knows the heavy weight of public opinion. Are there no girls of suitable age, who are fit to be companions to a husband? No, not one. He thinks of the storm that would break over his head if he thought of a young widow near his own age. He remembers young Krishnarao, who did brave all and marry a widow; and he remembers, all too well, how the lot he had to

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bear finally broke his spirit and he committed suicide.

Then he remembers with a sigh Bhimabai, sister of one of his schoolmates, who was such a beautiful girl, so bright and intelligent, just a few years younger than himself. She was widowed at eight. He could have loved her and been happy: but what is this they tell him? They say that there has just been a great public scandal, that she has killed her child and been sentenced to imprisonment for life. Poor girl, what possibilities she had in her! He feels desperate enough to defy all public opinion and show that there is one man that has the courage of his convictions; but there comes back upon him with renewed power the thought of his father and mother. He is their only son. They have never denied him anything. They do not mind his being reformed, if only he is not too reformed. If he breaks away from old customs, it will break their hearts. And then his sister is just to be married to a boy belonging to a very wealthy, but orthodox family. And that would be broken off if he were to follow his convictions. Over and over he fights the battle, only at last to succumb, to walk in what his parents call "the good old way." He despises himself,

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and feels he is a hypocrite. His perorations at the club on reform seem to himself a mockery. If these customs which he hates are based on Hindu Shastras, then he does not want anything to do with the Shastras, and calls himself an agnostic or an infidel. Is it any wonder? Are the old people blameless for the irreligiousness of the young men of India? If these young men hate the customs, are they not going to despise the religion on which the customs are based and defended?

But we have digressed. Our friend on the deck is still talking of the freedom of women. We saw he longed that the women of India should have the same opportunities as Western women for unfettered growth to womanhood and education; and for the possibilities of a real home. But it can never come till men are reformed in their view of women. The mass of men in India do not respect or reverence woman. She makes no appeal to chivalry in them. Only a few days ago a fine young woman, a widow, was condemned to imprisonment for life for the murder of her infant. We are told she was exceptionally intelligent, and educated to some extent. The men, her partners in the crime, escaped. Is this going to make no appeal to Indian

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manhood? If the men, who should be the protectors of helpless girlhood and womanhood, are themselves not free to act, it seems better to call in the aid of government rather than let woman suffer on and on. If this must go on until all the old orthodox element of this generation has passed away, then the rising generation is going to be so much weaker and unfitted to cope with these social questions. Men who have not been allowed to live after their convictions, who have lived hypocritically, and, to be able to be consistent, have been forced to be infidels and agnostics, are not going, in the supreme moment of opportunity, to rise into strength and aggressiveness. We feel it to be a critical time for India's manhood as well as for her womanhood; for the downfall of womanhood is sure to bring with it the downfall of manhood also.

* * * * * *

Our steamer at last lay anchored off Bombay. We bade good-bye to our Indian friend and have never heard of him since. He has added one more to the hundreds of young men in India who hope and long for a chance, but feel powerless to make any movement toward its accomplishment.

He was no doubt met at the railway station on

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his arrival home by his father and male friends, but was not allowed to eat with them until he had performed *prayaschitt* (atonement) for his stay abroad; part of which consists in swallowing a disgusting mixture composed of the five products of the cow, viz: milk, curds, butter, dung and urine. Cleansed by this and a few other ceremonies from what he knows has been no sin, our friend is reinstated into caste. Perhaps he protested, or maybe he yielded to the inevitable with another gasp of *Kyā Karūn.*

The *prayaschitt* will be no bar to his conscience in dining in a private way occasionally *a l'Anglaise:* or in buying tea and cake at the railway stations on a journey. Later on we may perhaps find him a middle-aged man serving as a judge in some country district, having buried two child-wives, and married a third of ten years of age; his aspirations and convictions sacrificed; an unhappy, discontented, cynical man. We may find him occasionally on Congress platforms, his eloquence reserved for political questions which require no self-denial, and which bring about no ostracism; while as to social reform, his plea is still, *Kyā Karūn,* and his hope is deferred to the next generation.

Government, too, joins in the refrain of *Kyā*

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Karūn and says to zealous ones "wait"; but in the meantime who is to be responsible for the hundreds of girl-wives who will perish, as victims of the system of child marriage, or be ruined physically for life; for the suicides of girl-widows and the moral ruin of many; for the moral and physical ruin of hundreds of *Muralis* and *temple girls?* Again we ask, who is to be responsible, while men wait, for all this moral wrong and suffering? And how long is it to be allowed to go on?

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III

CHILD MARRIAGE

THE story of creation is simply told. Of woman, it is said, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and took one of his ribs from his side. "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man." And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman." "God did not take woman from man's head, that she should rule over him. Neither did He take her from his feet, that she should be his slave, or that he should trample on her. But he took her from his side that she should be his companion and help-meet."

The word child marriage is a misnomer. Marriage was never meant for children. When Khanderao Gaikowar, the Maharaja of Baroda, married his two favorite pigeons with all the pomp, ceremony and expenditure bestowed upon the marriages of his own children, all educated India was scandalized; but to the outside world it was no greater mockery than the marriage of a girl of eight to a grey-headed old man of sixty;

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or a baby girl of nine months to a boy of six; or even a girl of nine to a youth of sixteen.

What conception of life and its duties can such brides have? Marriage has been suggested to them ever since they knew anything, and is associated in their minds with plenty of sweets, fireworks, gorgeous dresses, and for a few days to be the centre of attention, with a possible ride on a horse or in a palanquin in a gay evening procession. Marriage to the bride is a synonym of a grand *tamasha* (show). The outside world agrees with the child. It is a grand *tamasha*. It is not marriage.

We remember how, on one occasion, a Hindu friend called upon us, and took our little girl upon his knee. He wanted to say something to her suitable for a child, and he said the first thing he would naturally have said to a little Hindu girl. He looked her in the face, and said in a laughing way, "Well, when are you going to get married?" Our little maid looked at him with great wondering eyes, and a confused silence fell over the room, until the subject was changed. The little lass soon forgot the query, but we never did; and many a time as we tucked her in her bed at night, or watched her eager enthusiasm over her studies, or noticed her guardianship over

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her brother, or felt her loving care that saved us some burden, have we thanked God that no iron custom had power to take her from our sheltering love and care, until she was able to stand alone, or choose for herself. She was our first-born, and awakened in our hearts for the first time that rich, parental love before which "there is neither male nor female." It is true she was "only a girl," but for years we called her "Comfort." Her father did not announce to his friends that "nothing" had been born, and motherhood was not embittered by her birth.

Knowing the heart of the parent, we often wonder how Hindu mothers feel when they send a winning little girl of eight away from their care and love to a strange home, to take the risk of an unkind mother-in-law or a worse husband. And as they tell her never to forsake her husband's home and return to them save as a dead body, we wonder that the very words do not freeze on their lips.

What loneliness must fill a child-wife's heart, when sent away from play with happy brothers and sisters, away from a loving mother's care and sympathy, as she takes up her life in her new home with the companionship of a grave husband of perhaps thirty-five or forty in a

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household of elderly women, and perhaps with stepchildren older than herself! We have tried to picture our own child in such a position, and instinctively we have covered our eyes with our hands to shut out the awful scene; and have said: "Impossible!"

We consider child marriage the greatest of woman's wrongs; and when accentuated by caste and the joint family system, it confronts us like a very Gibraltar. The custom is at least five hundred years older than the Christian Era. It is not the fruit of the Mohammedan invasion as some contend. The Zenana system is, but child marriage is woven in with the Hindu religion, and was inaugurated and sanctioned by its law-givers.

Child marriage leads to manifold evils. It may lead to much unhappiness, to much physical suffering of the child-wife, and possibly to her death. We have been told of a tribe whose wives are never able to walk upright. Through the efforts that were made after the death of Phulmani Dasi, the age of consent was raised to twelve. This may defend girls from strangers, but can be made most ineffectual in the case of husbands. To prove that the case of Phulmani was not an isolated one, we ask our readers to

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turn to the awful facts that were brought forward at that time; to the "Indian Medical Jurisprudence," and to the "Life-work of Mr. Malabari." An Indian lady asked an Indian medical student for a copy of the Medical Jurisprudence. He curtly replied that she did not want to read that, and when she did get a copy and perused it, she did not wonder that he did not want her to read it. It may be well to remember that the husband of Phulmani got only one year's imprisonment as punishment!

Again, child marriage is naturally the direct cause of much widowhood. Considering the fact that of the whole number of children born in any given year, only about one-half the number ever reach the age of twenty, it will not be strange if we have hundreds of widows who scarcely knew they were ever wives. It is also a great bar to the education of women and their full development. It leads to pauperism and to national degeneracy, and it often leads to great cruelty.

We personally know a fine Indian woman, industrious, careful, and with more than ordinary executive ability. She was married at nine months to a boy of six! They grew up together as playmates and knew no discord. As she ap-

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proached womanhood, her father-in-law made improper proposals to her which she resented and rejected. This so angered him that he became her enemy and turned the heart of his son against her. Then, what might have ripened into a lifelong affection, was turned into hatred. The young husband was most cruel, beating her with fire-wood or anything he could lay his hands upon. Once her mother, unable to bear it, took her away, but soon repented and started to take her back to her husband, saying, "When I gave her in marriage, she became as dead to me; let what will happen now." But fearing she would be killed by her husband's violence, a remoter relative took her away; kind friends have shielded her, and she has never returned to her "loving lord." She is now leading a useful, honorable, but lonely life.

Occasionally her husband tries to get her back. If he appealed to the law, she would have to go. Why not get a case against him for cruelty? She could not get witnesses. No relative or casteman or neighbor would testify against him. She would have to go back, the victim of a contract made when she was nine months old. Marriage should be optional, but religion and custom decree that Indian girls *must* be married.

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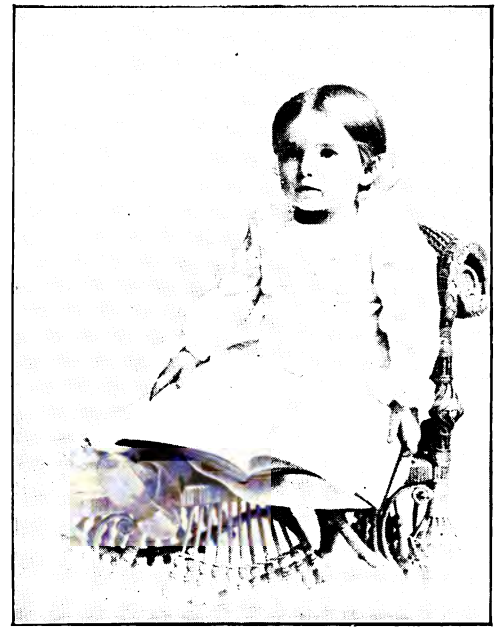
HINDU GENTLEMAN AND GIRL WIFE.



WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET MARRIED?

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Twelve years is the maximum age for marriage. If the girl is not married then, her friends are disgraced as well as herself. But a boy can marry at any age after five, or not at all if that pleases him better. Though the latter course is not approved, still if he does not marry, he is never persecuted or ostracized. Cardinal Manning justly says:

"By the law of nature, marriage is a voluntary and perpetual contract of which the contracting parties are the true ministers. It is an abuse of language as well as of moral and social life to call these marriages. Moreover, infants have natural rights of which no parent can deprive them. The law of England protects the rights not only of infants, but of minors. Liberty to dispose of themselves is a right inherent in all."

Rakhmabai fought the matter out in the courts of Bombay. In childhood she was betrothed to a boy relative of her own caste. She, for various reasons, was kept at home and well educated till she was nineteen. The boy had grown up illiterate and was in many ways repulsive to her. When he came to claim his bride, she felt it was a cruel custom that made an infant betrothal binding, and refused to go. The husband insti-

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tuted a suit against her. On the results hung vast issues. Eager men all over the country contended with the spirit of the seven princes of Persia and Media in the days of Esther. They too, felt that if she were victorious, "Then this deed of Rakhmabai's shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes when it shall be reported."

Rakhmabai, and her friends who stood by her, felt it was not for herself alone that she contended. If she had won her case, what a rift in the wrongs of womanhood it would have made! All India was roused. It showed that it could be roused. There were eager men on both sides. And what were the results?

At the first trial Justice Pinhey dismissed it, declaring that "it would be barbarous and revolting to all sense of justice to compel a woman to consummate a marriage that had been arranged without her consent and against her will." There was an appeal from this, and another English judge decided that she was Dadaji's wife, and to his house she must go, or else go to prison. Another appeal was made, but a compromise was effected. Rakhmabai paid two thousand rupees to her husband with which he could marry another wife; she also

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bore the cost of the trial which was several thousands more, and in the sight of her countrymen remains a wife and can never marry. But Dadaji is a man. He can have another wife and a home. Fearful men went back to their homes in security, while those who fought for Rakhmabai still wait, if "hope deferred" has not made their hearts sick.

But the bitter irony of it all was that this case was not won under Hindu law, but under an English law, (*Restitution of Conjugal Rights*, Act VIII., 1895) imported into India and enforced with imprisonment; *and this same law was obsolete in England when this case was tried!* While Hindus deplore this imported law, and declare it to be foreign to all Hindu ideas and wishes, and leaders among them have earnestly tried to have it set aside (See Chap. xiii., Art. 8), yet Dadaji and his friends saw no inconsistency in prosecuting Rakhmabai under it, and were glad to avail themselves of it.

We know of many women in Western lands who have not married, not because they had no offer, but because they felt that there were claims upon them that forbade it. And the earth has been the richer for their self-denying lives. We recall one young woman who was engaged to

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be married, when her mother died, and her aged father was left alone. She gave up all thought of a home for herself, and lived on with her father, tenderly caring for him through years of frail health till he passed into the beyond. One of the most beautiful sights on earth is a noble, unselfish woman, whether she be wife, mother or sister.

Hindu law gives no divorce, though custom allows it in some low castes. One of the *Swamis* that visited America last year was asked by a New York lady in our hearing, if marriage was held sacred in India. "Very," he added, "far more that in this country, madame." And he sneeringly referred to divorce as it exists in America and added: "We have no divorce in India." Why did he not tell the whole truth? For woman marriage is irrevocable. She has no choice in it, as she is usually married before she knows what marriage is. Her husband may ill-treat her, beat her, almost kill her, but she can get no divorce from him, or from a contract that she never was a party to. If she runs away to escape his cruelty, she must, for the rest of her life, be regarded as a widow and disgraced. But he, noble man, can marry another, or he can bring other wives into the home if she stays, or

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if he choose, he can desert her entirely. But there is no remedy for her.

We know another Indian woman who was married to a young boy of sixteen. The boy's father was a Brahman priest. After a year the little bride was taken with much pomp and ceremony to her husband's home. The girl's appearance did not suit the young husband. There was an aunt in the family who spared nothing to work against the child, finding fault with all she did. If she went near the husband to serve him with food, he would hit her hard on the crown of her head with his knuckles. Though she was but ten, yet they expected her to do every kind of work. She did the household work, brought water for all, cleaned the utensils, cleaned the floor, did the washing, milked the cow and kept the stable clean. If the cow did not yield the proper quantity of milk, she was punished. The relatives in the house said the girl was possessed by an evil spirit, and would bring misfortune to the family.

The course of treatment she received was enough to turn her into a demon. Her father-in-law would hang her up to the beam of the roof and beat her pitilessly. He would sometimes suspend her to the same place by her ankles

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—perhaps for variety. Under her head, thus suspended, he would put a vessel with live coals in it, on which he would throw red peppers and almost suffocate her. Sometimes when he had hung her to the roof, for fear she would be tempted to break the rope and fall, he would spread branches of prickly pear on the floor beneath her, and let her hang till he chose to relieve her. Once or twice this man inflicted on her a cruel punishment which decency forbids us to relate. In both these stories, it has been the father-in-law who has been the aggressive one, and not the proverbial mother-in-law. She, our friend said, was usually very kind to her, only once in a while did she punish her by shutting her up in a room where red peppers were kept burning! When she was fourteen, her husband died, and she was subjected to greater hardships. Her head was shaven, her bright colored dresses and few ornaments were taken away, while she lived on one meal a day and toiled hard.

The neighbors knew of all this cruelty and suggested to her to run away, but their motive was evil. The old hag of an aunt tried to persuade her into evil connections, but the girl remained firm. When her father heard of it, he exhorted her not to do it, but to stay and die.

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This had been her commission when she left her father's house as a bride. The father-in-law's priestly career was not disturbed by his cruelty. The public did not feel that it disqualified him in the least. Had he been in a Western land, public opinion would have made it unbearable for him and the old aunt. They would have been cast out from decent society.

In time other misfortunes fell on this household. The kind-hearted mother-in-law died. The father-in-law then seems to have repented in a measure, and before his death, put the young woman into safer and better hands. The old hag of an aunt followed her, and tried to get possession of her through the law, but she was declared not a minor, and escaped. Need we add that the face of this young woman still bears the trace of all this suffering and cruelty? She says that she never once planned to escape, but just nerved herself to suffer, for had it not always been taught and impressed upon her that she must die rather than forsake her husband's house?

We have not told this story of cruelty for the purpose of being sensational, nor to convey the idea that all Hindus treat their wives in this way. We are glad it is not the general way: but still, we are told, such cases are not rare. Nor have

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we added stories of wife-murders of which often the neighbors and relatives are *silent* witnesses. Neither have we told it because there are no social abuses in other lands. There are, *but they are never vindicated as religion and custom.* Public sentiment makes it lively for the perpetrators, and protects woman. But we have told this story, because it reveals the helplessness and unprotectedness of woman, in India. She is neither protected by the chivalry of men nor by public opinion.

What avenues were there through which this woman could escape such cruelty? The nearest tank or well, or a life of shame. No one near her would give her honest employment. The girl would be disgraced in their eyes for leaving her husband. No public disgrace would be attached to the husband or the family for cruelty. Did she go far enough away, she might get a place somewhere as cook, but that is all that would be open to her. There is so little employment open to women, while as a lone woman she would be exposed to untold temptation, and find but little respect. To many women, suffering on seems far preferable than to venture on an unknown, uncertain life of disgrace, temptation and loneliness. If parental love and pity can no

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longer bear to witness her position and shelter her, then the parents have also to suffer disgrace and their daughter must be in their house as a widow.

The story reveals the wrong of the joint family system. The patriarchal system has many beautiful features, but was better suited to primitive times than to the nineteenth century. It leaves but little room for personal conviction and individuality. A young bride does not go to her new home as queen of her husband's heart, and mistress of his house; but she may live, rear children and die, subject to her mother-in-law, widowed aunts and elder sisters-in-law. She may never talk with her husband openly and frankly before them; and never understand the first syllable of her rights or the freedom of women; and even to resent the slightest suggestion of them is regarded as the deepest heresy. If the family and her husband are kind she is contented and happy. May God pity the woman that suffers and understands as well.

The story reveals the abominable condition of public opinion, the need of modified legislation for women, and the awful inequality between man and woman.

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IV

ENFORCED WIDOWHOOD

WIDOWHOOD, as well as barrenness, was a kind of shame and reproach in Israel, as may be gathered from the words, "And shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." Isa. liv. 4. This thought prevails in eastern countries to-day, but it is left to the Hindu to excel in wronging and oppressing the widow.

In the Old Testament tender provision is made for widows. They were permitted to remarry. God charged the people; "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (Ex. xxii. 22), and then follows the solemn warning, coupled with a promise: "If thou afflict them in anywise and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Again, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me." What balm these words have been in times of bereavement to many hearts in Christian lands.

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Enforced Widowhood

We well remember the night that our own family circle, sobbing and shaken with grief, knelt in the room where a loved father had just passed away, and a neighbor solemnly and tenderly addressed God in prayer as "The Father of the fatherless and the widow's God." The words stood out with new light because for the first time they covered our need. How many times that scene and those words have returned to us as we have beheld the sad face and shaven head of some widow, and made us long to lead her to trust in the same God.

Then God makes many charges to the Israelites, that they "should not take a widow's raiment to pledge,"—Deut. xxiv. 17; "the gleanings of the harvest field were to be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow,"—Deut. xxiv. 19; "they were not to pervert judgment of the widow,"—Deut. xxvii. 19; and "not to take a widow's ox for pledge." "If ye oppress not the widow . . . then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever,"—Jer. vii. 6. Job pleads his own righteousness by saying, "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy,"—Job xxix. 13. Ezekiel's complaint against the people was that "they vexed the widow,"—Ezek. xvii. 7. God

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through Malachi declares Himself a swift witness against those "that oppress the widow,"—Mal. iii. 5. In the New Testament are the touching passages: "A certain poor widow,"—Mark xii. 42, and "The only son of his mother, and she was a widow,"—Luke vii. 12. What volumes these few words tell! Paul gives a touching description in 1 Tim. v. 5: "A widow indeed and desolate." James gives the closing word: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." In the light of these tender promises, this loving care, these solemn warnings, how awful the treatment of Hindu widows appears!

A Braham convert to Christ said to us very earnestly a few years ago: "I used to feel very hot toward the English government over what I feel are our wrongs. But when I came to know God, and read the Bible, I understood. I saw God was letting the English make return to us for our long neglect and down-treading of the low castes, and of our oppression of the widow."

In 1829, Lord William Bentinck enacted the now famous law that prohibited the *Suttee*-rite within British dominions whereby a wife could

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SUTTEE RITE (BURNING THE DEAD)

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ascend the funeral-pyre of her husband and perish in the flames with the dead body. For more than two thousand years this custom had been in vogue, in which countless lives had been destroyed. It was not compulsory, but optional; though no doubt great pressure was brought upon the widow to do it, and it was considered sublimely meritorious by all classes. But once the vow was taken to do it, there was no retreat. If her courage failed her at the last, or as the flames folded about her; or if she managed to escape; she could never be reinstated into her family or caste.

As a precaution against a failure of courage, women were often drugged, or the wood was tied down upon the body so that escape would be impossible. An eyewitness to a *Suttee* tells how as the burning woman fled from the pyre, the bystanders among whom were the dead man's brothers, shouted out: "Cut her down: knock her down with a bamboo; tie her hand and foot and throw her in again." And this would have been done, had not a humane magistrate interfered. The woman fled into the river, and he had her carried to the hospital, assuring her, that as she would now be cast off by her people, she should be the ward of the state.

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Other widows approached the pyre with the greatest heroism and with the lofty idea of all it would mean. Had not their later law-books promised that "every woman who thus burns herself shall remain in Paradise with her husband 350,000,000 years by destiny, also that she would secure salvation to herself, her husband and to their families of the seventh generation?" And there is no doubt that many preferred it to the lot of a widow. One writer says, "The momentary agony of suffocation in the flames was nothing compared to her lot as a widow;" and others have affirmed that, were the hand of law once removed, many would be glad to return to the custom.

The custom was not practiced in Vedic times. There was not a single text authorizing it, but by a willful mistranslation, of which a part was forged, the priesthood introduced the custom, and later writers sanctioned it.

The early missionaries to India petitioned government to abolish the crime; but they were told "that the social and religious customs of the people constituted no part of the business of the government and that their rule in India might be endangered by such interference."

Matters went on till in the early part of this

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century, when Lord William Bentinck, who was Governor-General of India, had the courage to enact the law referred to above, which rendered the *Suttee* a case of culpable homicide and threatened with severe penalties all who encouraged or in any way assisted at the ceremony. A petition was sent in to the Privy Council, signed by eighteen thousand people, many of whom represented the best families of Calcutta, asking that this practice might be allowed to continue; and although this law was enacted in 1829, it did not take full effect till 1844. In some of the native states it lingered on much longer. Wilkins in his book on "Modern Hinduism," records the last case he had heard of, as occurring in 1880.

Says Ramabai: "Now that the *Suttee-rite*, partly by the will of the people, and partly by the law of the empire, is prohibited, many good people feel easy in their minds, thinking that the Hindu widow has been delivered from her terrible fate; but little do they realize the true state of affairs."

A leading reformer refers to the present sufferings of Indian widows as "*cold suttee*," and rightly, too, we think. The very word widow, that should excite the tenderest compassion in the hearts of men, is in this land a synonym of

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sorrow, grief, shame, wrong, contempt, and desolation. Even the word for widow, "rand," is the common word for harlot also. What does it matter if the common people add to it the compound, "mund," and call a widow "rand-mund," for "mund" means shaven, and but intensifies the shame. Among the Marathi people, she is called "bordkee," a contemptuous term meaning bareheaded, or shaven.

She is also an inauspicious thing, especially because of the belief that if one sees her the first of any object in the morning, "bad luck" is inaugurated then for the entire day; or if she crosses the path of one who is just starting on a journey, he will postpone his journey, but will not deny himself the luxury of uttering imprecations on her defenceless head.

"Widowhood," says Pandita Ramabai, "is regarded as a punishment for sins committed by the woman in her former existence on earth; and that sin is described as disobedience or disloyalty to the husband, or murdering him in a former existence. If the widow be a mother of sons, she is not usually an object of pity. Although she is a sinner, yet social abuse and hatred are mitigated by the fact that she is a mother of the superior beings."

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A widow whose children are only girls does not fare so well. But it is on the child-widow, or childless young widow, that the abuse and hatred of the community falls, for "a husband having died sonless has no right to enter heaven or immortality. There is no place for a man who is destitute of male offspring."

Of the young widow what shall we say? If she is a mere child, the cloud passes over her head and for several years leaves no shadow. She is, in her happy, innocent glee, unconscious of what has happened. She romps and plays, and makes "mud-pies," nestles by her mother's side, or clambers up on her father's knees as confidingly as any other child; though she may live to know the bitter truth that, some day, custom and religious faith will have a stronger hold on them than parental love. Now and then, some one says some bitter thing or pushes her away as if her touch was defiling. It jars her child-heart, but childhood is full of spring and it may soon be forgotten in some absorbing game. Some day, childlike, she runs to some neighborly scene of festivity only to be sent away, as a widow is a bad omen. She does not understand why she should go, and hence, says Mr. Ragunathrao, "she is removed by force. She cries and is re-

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warded by her parents with a blow accompanied by such words as these: 'You were a most sinful being in your previous birth, and you have therefore been widowed. Instead of hiding your shame in a corner of the house, you go and injure others.' It begins to dawn on her that she is different from other girls. She cannot bathe as they do: if a priest comes around, she may be shaven and dressed in widow's garb and stood before him. She often asks why these things are done to her. During the earlier part of her life she is appeased with some story or other. Later, such devices fail and the truth breaks fully upon her mind."

At fifteen or sixteen her beautiful glossy wealth of hair must be shorn; her bright clothes removed; no ornaments allowed her; she must eat but one meal a day; must fast twice a month; and must never join in the family feasts or jubilees. She is frequently the family drudge; must never think of remarriage; must bear the taunts and suspicions of others and be guarded lest she bring upon the family disgrace by some improper step; she is never to wear the bright red paint on her forehead that other women wear; she has no right to be bright and happy; and if she weeps much, she may be taunted that she is crying for another husband.

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Her life becomes hopeless and intolerable. It sometimes ends in a neighboring tank or well, or launches out desperately and defiantly into a life of shame, or becomes entangled in some social infamy that may or may not reach the public gaze; but, at any risk, the family must be shielded from disgrace, even if crime be resorted to. A wide difference is made between the disgrace and the crime. At the disgrace, all tongues wag; at the crime, the neighbors may be mute and say: "Who knows how soon such a trouble may come to our own house."

If the young wife is sixteen or seventeen when her husband dies, and without children, the trouble engulfs her without delay. When her husband lies dying, if his parents are there, *she* is not the one that tenderly ministers to him in his last moments. *It would not be proper.* If she is in the room at all, it is by sufferance. And when he is gone, it is as if the sun were suddenly blotted out of the clear sky. The mother-in-law's grief may be blended with bitter curses, and with the declaration that she is the one that has brought all this misfortune on the household.

The village barber's desecrating hands are laid upon her hair, and womanhood's glory and cov-

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ering is removed ; for her husband's body cannot be borne away till this is done. The barber does his work roughly and with no pitying hand, and she endures his coarse taunts and insults in silent agony. Her ornaments are stripped from her, and a coarse widow's garment, white or red, is brought her. How the very iron enters her soul as she touches its coarse texture; and she remembers her lot and disfigurement with a fresh shriek and wail. What a wide, wide chasm this dear soul crosses that night between the past and the future ; but those about her simply say "It is our custom," and that is what nerves their hands and hearts.

And what is her future? It all depends upon herself, and her circumstances. If she remains in her parents' house, her lot may be much softened, but they do not always dare to defy all for her sake. If she is independent, with some daring and a fund of animal spirits, or if she accepts her fate stolidly, she may still extract a good deal of comfort out of life. Cruel and unkind relatives have it in their power to heat the furnace seven times hotter for her. Men *of her own household*, or strangers may desecrate her womanhood, and complete her ruin. But in the case of the high-spirited, sensitive girl who feels

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that it is God's curse upon her, we can only say God pity her!

We know one such case. She was married at eight and widowed at nine. As she began to comprehend her situation, she began to suffer. She was in her own father's house, and treated kindly, but her father was an orthodox priest and she was not allowed to deviate from a widow's lot. She felt she was cursed of God, and that was to her sensitive spirit the hardest of all. What had she done? From the day her head was shaven, she never put foot outside the front door, and never appeared before a stranger. Her heart and spirit were broken, and she is now fast sinking in consumption. A few more months will complete the sad story; and when she is laid in the grave her coarse widow's garb will be her only burial robe.

We know another young girl who was widowed at ten. She did not know her husband was so ill, and he died while she, in her girlish glee, was taking part in a neighbor's wedding. She tells how, when those about her heard the news, they were in a procession, and how her heart was cut with their contemptuous looks and manner. She could not comprehend what it meant. She is only thirteen

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now, but her spirit is breaking, and her life is blighted.

The alternative to the *Suttee* was for the widow to live, but to never mention the name of another man, and by an austere life of piety, she might be reunited to her husband after death. This austere life of piety, of fasting and devotion, no doubt also atoned for the sin in a previous birth that brought the widowhood upon her, and she would also escape by it the same awful fate in a birth to come.

Middle-aged widows are much better able to hold their own and to meet and live out this alternative to the *Suttee.* They are not left entirely desolate, as they have their children left to them, and are comforted in them, and are often loved, and keep their old place of authority and respect in the home. Even if she have no children, her age, in addition to her piety, may win her a place and respect. We know no more touching sight on our streets than the sad face of some elderly pious widow in a group of happy, well dressed daughters-in-law, sisters and nieces. Her face, often wan and pinched with repeated fasting, her shaven head, and her bent form clad in coarse garments, speak volumes as to her attempt to make an atonement for a widowhood for which she was never to blame.

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Enforced Widowhood

The custom of enforced widowhood is confined to the Hindus, and that chiefly to the higher castes. Many of the lower castes allow widows to remarry, though some of the low castes copy the custom even to the head-shaving. Among Mohammedans, child marriage is not common: and widows remarry as they do in any land: but they heap up wrong against woman in their customs of polygamy and divorce. The *Koran* allows four wives, while a man may divorce his wife at pleasure, on any pretext, by breaking her marriage necklace and bidding her depart.

When we consult the Census Report of 1891, we find that of the 287,000,000 inhabitants of India, 207,000,000 are Hindus and 57,000,000 are Mohammedans; while the remaining millions are distributed among the other races living in the land. These figures will help us to proportion the wrongs of women. The number of widows is 23,000,000, *and of this number, many are mere children and girls, and many of them never knew what it meant to be a wife.*

Hon. P. Chentsalrao says: "I confess it has always been a puzzle to me how a system so inhuman and cruel has found existence in this country among a class of men who have cultivated their feelings of kindness to such a nicety

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that they dread to kill an ant, or cut open an egg." At what antipodes is the cruel treatment of widows and the *panjarpole!* (the hospital for aged and disabled horses, dogs, bullocks, monkeys).

Rao Bahadur C. H. Deshmukh says: "It must not be forgotten that the priests derive a very large benefit from perpetual widowhood. A widow thinks that her misfortunes arise from her not having attended to religious duties in former lives, and therefore she must devote her time and wealth to pilgrimages, and so on. The wealth of most widows is devoured by priests. It is the widows, rich and poor, that maintain the priests in luxury." What is to be the remedy?

1. We would have remarriage made optional. Manu, the greatest authority next to the Vedas, says that it is unlawful for a woman to mention the name of another man after her husband's death; and that by remarriage, she brings disgrace on herself in this world, and shall be excluded from heaven. He also says: "Nor is a second husband anywhere prescribed for a virtuous woman." There is no choice, the edict from which there is no appeal says, "Once a widow, always a widow."

In July, 1856, Lord Canning legalized the re-

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marriage of Hindu widows. It is called the "Widow Remarriage Act of 1856." But he did not preserve to them their civil rights. By remarriage a widow forfeits her life-interest in all property left her by her husband, both movable and immovable. Provision is made in this law that if a widow depart from a life of rectitude she does not forfeit this right. But if she remarries it is forfeited, "as if," says the Act, "she had then died." The law also declares that the offspring of a widow by a second marriage shall not be held to be illegitimate or incapable of inheriting property.

There is not sufficient explicitness in the act about the widow's *stridhan* (her own personal property). To avoid giving occasion to her late husband's relatives to bring against her at the time of, or after marriage, the charge of theft, she either abandons this *stridhan*, or else has to go before a magistrate and make a declaration in respect to it.

The government was right in sanctioning such marriages, but it did not go far enough. The code says to the widow, "you may marry," but caste says, "you shall not;" and caste triumphs. A widow may lead an immoral life, and if she gets into trouble, caste winks while she gets out

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of it, even by crime, and the widow is retained in caste. Real sin has not unfitted her for society, nor has the crime lowered the social standing of those who committed it. But let a virtuous widow remarry; a perfectly lawful step in the eyes of the state; and caste hounds her out of society.

The loss of property is not the only loss. Both husband and wife are excommunicated, and perhaps their nearest relatives with them; and these relatives can only be reinstated at an enormous cost. Europeans can hardly judge what this social ostracism is that separates a man from all that he holds dear. No one, on the pain of excommunication themselves, can eat with them; no one is willing to marry their children; no one, at the time of death, is willing to bury them; nor are they allowed to worship in the public temples. To the clannish Hindu this is an awful price to pay. Caste, if it chooses, can keep up its petty persecutions and make a man's life unendurable. Mr. Malabari in speaking of this says: "In human custom, caste is more potent in its secret persecutions than was the inquisition of Spain."

At the beginning of remarriages, the little persecutions were even sorer than now. No one was allowed to trade with them, no barber would

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shave the man, they were not allowed to use water out of the public wells. Rao Bahadur was a government official, being a judge of the Bombay Small-Cause Court. He was the first one to marry a widow in the Purbhu caste. A short time after his marriage, the corpses of both husband and wife were found floating in a well. None could tell whether they had committed suicide, or whether it was the work of villainy. So deep was the feeling of bitterness, and the sense of shame and disgrace, against widow remarriage, and against the parties who broke the old custom, that the latter was not improbable.

Ramabai tells of a high caste man in Cutch who, feeling unable to endure the persecutions that followed his marriage with a widow, committed suicide. At present the subject is more familiar to all classes, and even in villages, one can express his sympathy with the subject of remarriage without rebuke. But the lot of those who do remarry is still sore enough, and the penalties of excommunication can never be lightly despised.

Madhowdas Ragnathdas, the first Guzerati Hindu to marry a widow, says his experience has taught him that "the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 is nothing more than a pronounce-

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ment of pious intentions. For all practical purposes it has proved a dead letter, and will remain so unless the legislature will introduce into it special clauses for the protection of the parties to a widow remarriage from caste persecutions. The unfortunate couple becomes, under existing circumstances, not only the victim of a formal excommunication by caste, but also of dark designs and secret plottings, and it is impossible to bring the authors of them to book." In proof, one has only to read his interesting book, "The Story of a Widow Remarriage," and see how, for eighteen years, influential castemen never forgave him but sought to injure him on every occasion.

Once, after the resignation of Sir Richard Temple as Governor of Bombay, the Acting Governor, Hon. Mr. Ashburner, held two evening parties at government house to which he and his wife were invited. This was too much for some of his fellow-castemen who were determined to stop future invitations, and they even to the length of having one gentleman wait on Mr. Ashburner and tell him that many respectable gentlemen had been displeased with the presence of excommunicated persons at government house parties. The latter agreed that he would make inquiries and then do what he

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thought proper. Friends of Mr. Madhowdas took up the matter, and when Mr. Ashburner understood the case, he said he saw no reason whatever to remove his name from the list of guests of the government house.

Mr. Justice Rande estimates the number of widow remarriages to be about five hundred; and in his address before the Eleventh Indian Social Congress which was held last year at Amraoti, Berar states that in all India last year there were twenty-five widow remarriages celebrated. In the Punjab there were ten; in Bombay, six; in the Central Provinces, four; in Madras, three; and in the Northwest Provinces and Bengal, one each. He said the paucity of the total number was partly due to the calamities—plague and famine—of the year, and partly to the prohibition of all marriages on account of the year being a Sinhast year. And may we add that it may be in part due to the fact that at present, there is a decided retrograde movement on the subject of reform in India, and a disposition to return to the old ways. But we are glad to say that Bombay presidency is said to average six remarriages a year.

The congress also passed a resolution which is in itself a running commentary on the defective

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working of the act of 1856. The resolution was in substance that a widow on remarriage be allowed civil rights in regard to her late husband's property that had been left her; that there be a better understanding as to her rights in respect to her *stridhan* or personal property; that the pair be allowed religious liberty to worship in the public temples; and lastly, a protest against the disfigurement of widows by head shaving.

We devoutly wish that the work of the Social Congress did not end in resolutions. Perhaps no one says harder things of the inconsistencies of the *congresswala*, than some of their own number. Says an editor in a recent issue; "Educated India at any rate was expected to come to the rescue, and give a new direction to the trend of public opinion; but the hope has never been realized. Speaking from congress platforms and loudly demanding political rights and privileges from government, might certainly direct their attention with great effect to social matters."

But what of the reformers whose practice does not tally with their preaching? Ramabai says: "I have known men of great learning and high reputation who took oaths to the effect that if they were to become widowers and wished to remarry again, that they would not marry a child

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PORTRAIT OF RAMABAI

GROUP OF CHILD WIDOWS

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but would marry a widow. But no sooner had their first wives died, than they forgot all about the oaths and married little girls. Society threatens them with excommunication, their friends and relatives entreat them with tears, others offer money and maids if they will only give up the idea of marrying a widow. Few have been able to resist all this."

A better authority than Mr. Madhowdas Ragnathdas could not be found on this side of Indian life, for he not only married a widow himself, but openly identified himself with the cause. His home became an asylum for those who wished to remarry; and he assisted them not only with his sympathy but with his substance. He says there have been widow remarriages in this province both among Gujerati and Marathi Hindus, *but in almost all cases the bridegrooms came from the uneducated classes. The educated have not led the way.*"

We would not be unfair. The verbal agitation of the subject has no doubt done much to clear the atmosphere, but how much greater a power would the agitation have been had it been backed by the personal action of the reformers. The back of the difficulty might have been broken by this time.

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In the world money is power. This thought is borne out by the names of the coins in other lands. We have the British "sovereign," the French "napoleon," and the American "almighty dollar;" and so in India the silver rupee can atone for much. Widow remarriage is not an inviting prospect for a poor man. But the wealthy and influential have been better able to bear the difficulties and live them down. Money can get husbands and little wives for the children of outcasted parents; and money can alleviate the common lot; though we have heard of men who have gone back to their villages and, after four or five years, when their anger had cooled off, they were reinstated in caste without a word.

What we ask is, that government, having made it lawful for a widow to remarry, should still feel she is a government ward and protect her from the persecutions of caste. Caste should not be allowed to defy law with such a high hand as to deter one of its members from acting according to law. A man may refuse to eat with another if he likes, or to marry his children, or refuse to associate with him; but he should have no power to prevent others doing so if they so choose, nor power to persecute or hinder or injure the man or such of his friends as may

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choose to support his cause. We feel that it is the duty of government to protect the rights of individual members of society, as is done in other lands.

To men whose only crime is that they followed their own convictions of right, convictions which the law has sanctioned, there should be some means of redress. This is not a matter of religion. It is downright iniquity to allow any class of people in these enlightened days to deprive their fellow-men of all social and religious liberty. Had America handed back the Philippine Islands to Spain, it would have been on the condition that, throughout the islands, there should be religious liberty. This would have been one of the very first conditions. If the facts were known, as they really are, of the religious and social tyranny existing among the Hindus under English rule, there would be much greater indignation than there is. Reform will never come from within. Among the Hindus and Mohammedans the A B C of religious and social liberty is unknown.

2. Head shaving is a cruel wrong. Men have no right to disfigure a woman without her wish and consent, simply because she has borne a great sorrow and lost her natural protector. It

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must be done if the wife is fifteen years or more of age, before the body of the husband can be carried to the burning-ground. A priest is unwilling to burn the body without its having been done. The hair is burned with the dead body. It is popularly believed that if the woman keeps her hair on her head, that it binds her husband's soul in hell. Others say that it is done to make her less attractive to other men. An increasing number of widows refuse to submit to it, but it is considered a shameless and disgraceful thing to do. Perhaps none are harder upon young widows than old shaven widows, although they have suffered themselves.

After the first shaving it is periodically done. Among the Deccan Brahmans it is done every two weeks. If the widow be a mere child she escapes till she is fifteen or sixteen, and then the hour can no longer be evaded. As an illustration of how deep-rooted this custom is, we knew of an old couple, of sixty and seventy years of age, who were both smitten with the plague last year. The wife survived the husband but four hours, yet when he died, iron custom laid its hand upon the aged wife, though she was unconscious and dying, and shaved her head!

A woman's hair is her covering and crown of

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glory, and it is a cruel indignity to deprive her of it. Government must see that the custom is not enforced if the widow is unwilling: that it should at least be optional.

3. We protest against the social position given to widows—the ban that is put upon them for widowhood. If a plain dress is considered becoming to a woman as a widow, why should it be of a coarser texture than that of her sisters? Why must she fast and other women not? Why should she not share freely in the comforts and pleasures of the family? Why should she not be allowed a part in the religious portion of any family festivity? Why should widows be made to eat by themselves at weddings and other feasts? Why must they shrink guiltily back as they cross some one's path, for fear of being a bad omen to him? Why should the widow be so often an object of suspicion and solicitude for fear she bring disgrace upon the family? Why should men treat her as they dare treat no married woman? Would a man be willing to live under such a ban? Never! Is it strange then if many widows lose heart and ambition; or that this very ban increases temptation for them? They lose self-respect, and men more oft respect them less than other women.

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Says Mr. Madhowdas: "It is contended that 'it tends to the spiritual exaltation of the widow. Deprived of her lord, she renounces the fleeting joys of the world, and consecrates her life to works of piety and benevolence. She is a sister of charity and of mercy in her house and on the street. She is by the bedside of the sick; she comforts the weary and miserable; she has a word of advice for all; she is the centre from which radiates a divine light. Her heart is full of happiness and she looks forward with eagerness to the day when her life of devotion and unselfishness will be ended and she may rejoin her husband.' . . . There may be a widow here and there, one in ten thousand, whose beautiful life approaches this ideal. The unnatural restraint put upon them cannot make angels of them. There is nothing to exalt and uplift them: there is much to debase them. There are undoubtedly many who are leading exemplary lives; but they are good and pious, not because of the custom, but in spite of it. I do not suggest for a moment that all young widows go wrong, but I do say that the prohibition is calculated to lead them wrong, and not to their spiritual exaltation, as has been vainly supposed."

If it is true that this treatment of the widow is

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for her spiritual exaltation, then why must the ban follow her even after death; for if a widow dies without children, she is not allowed a religious ceremony at her funeral!

When we remember the words quoted at the beginning of this subject, we do not hesitate to say that we believe that India is suffering to-day in part for her treatment of the widow.

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V

THE ZENANA

As we alighted from the Bombay mail one morning to the platform of the station of one of our northern cities, we saw a Mohammedan gentleman hurrying about the platform. Then there appeared four men bearing a palanquin, who, under his direction, placed it opposite the door of a second-class carriage that had its windows all closed. There was a good deal of bustle, and finally servants held up a cloth on each side of the carriage door, thus making a covered passageway from the carriage to the palanquin. What was it, that had arrived in the train for this man that he so zealously shielded from the gaze of the people crowded on the platform? Had some one sent him a Mysore tiger, and was he afraid it would get away? We carefully watched the proceedings, and lo! beneath the cloth, stepping out of the carriage, we beheld the feet—not of a tiger, but of a woman. In a moment the servants dropped the cloth, and the bearers picked up the palanquin on their shoulders and walked off. Its doors were closed, and

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we saw no one but the gentleman and the servants that followed it. He had probably come to meet his wife, and their greeting could remain until their home was reached. She, in her seclusion, is what is popularly called in India a *Zenana* or *Purdah* lady.

"The veil, as instituted by Mohammed and prescribed in the *Koran* is," says Sir William Muir, "obligatory on all who acknowledge the authority of the book. Taken in conjunction with the other restrictions there imposed on domestic life, it has led to the institution of the Harem and Zenana—that is, the private portion of the home in which women are, with more or less stringency in various lands, secluded from the outer world."

The harem is an Arabic term meaning anything forbidden or not to be touched. And as we become more fully acquainted with the system, we find how fitting the name is. The seclusion of women has existed among other peoples, "but it is among the modern Mohammedan peoples that it has attained its most perfect development; and the harems of the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia, may be taken as the most elaborate and best known specimens of the type;" and to these we might add the Zenanas

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of the native rulers of Mohammedan states in India.

The word *Zenana*, confined in its use to India, is of Persian origin. *Zan* is the word for women and *Zenana* means pertaining to women. The word Zenana, as popularly used, means the apartments devoted exclusively for the women of the household of an Indian gentleman. When we use the term "Zenana woman," we mean one who lives in seclusion. The word *purdah* means a veil, and a "purdah lady" is a term used in the same sense.

The veil or *purdah* as instituted by Mohammed, has the following history. Mohammed was married at the age of twenty-five to a widow of forty by the name of Khadija. But in spite of the disparity of years, it was a happy union. She believed in him, in his visions and in his call; and was a great source of strength and encouragement to him. Two months after her death he married Sauda, another widow, and was betrothed to Ayesha a little girl of six or seven who, till his death, remained his favorite and most beloved wife.

It was after his flight to Medina, that his domestic life, as well as his general character, underwent so great a change. He had married

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five wives since the death of Khadija. Muir says: "He was now going on to threescore years: but the weakness for the sex only seemed to grow with his years, and the attractions of his increasing harem were insufficient to prevent his passion from wandering beyond its ample limits. Happening one day to visit the dwelling of his adopted son, Zeid, he found him absent. As he knocked, Zeinab, wife of Zeid, started up to array herself decently for the prophet's reception. But her good looks had already, through the half-open door, unveiled themselves too freely before his admiring gaze, and Mohammed, smitten by the sight, exclaimed: 'Gracious Lord! Good heavens! How thou dost turn the hearts of men!'

"Zeinab overheard the prophet's words, and proud of her conquest, told her husband. He went at once to Mohammed, and offered to divorce his wife for him. 'Keep thy wife to thyself,' he answered, 'and fear God.' But the words fell from unwilling lips. Zeid was ten years younger than Mohammed, and he was short and ill-favored; and now that his wife seemed to court so distinguished an alliance, he probably did not care to keep her any longer as his wife, so he formally divorced her. The

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prophet hesitated. Zeid was his adopted son, and to marry the divorced wife of an adopted son was unheard of in Arabia and would create a scandal. But the flame would not be stifled. And so, casting his scruples to the winds, he resolved to have her. The prophetic ecstasy seemed to come upon him. As he recovered he said, 'Who will run and tell Zeinab that the Lord hath joined her to me in marriage?' and this was done without delay."

The marriage caused no small obloquy; and, to save his reputation, Mohammed had recourse to revelation. The Almighty sanctioned it, and the scandal was removed by the revelation, and Zeid was no longer called the "son of Mohammed," as the revelation had included the admonition that adopted sons were to go by the names of their natural fathers.

"About this time," says Muir, "the veil was established for the female sex." "The reason for its imposition was said to be that Moslem women were exposed to rude remarks from men of the baser sort as they walked about. *But the prophet's own recent experience in the unwilling sight of Zeinab's charms was perhaps a stronger reason.*" He then promulgated the following command:

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"Speak unto women that they restrain their eyes and preserve their modesty, and display not their ornaments, excepting that which cannot be hid. And let them cast their veils over their bosoms and not show their ornaments saving to their husbands, their fathers, their sons, nephews, slaves and children."

Muir adds: "Out of this command of the Koran have grown the stringent usages of the Harem and Zenana, which, with more or less seclusion, prevail throughout the Moslem world. However degrading and barbarous these usages appear, yet, with its loose code of polygamy and divorce, some restraints of the kind seem almost indispensable in Islam, if only for the maintenance of decency and social order."

Mohammed was even severer with his own wives. "No one, unless bidden, was to enter their apartments; they were not to be spoken to but from behind a curtain; and, to slake the last embers of jealousy, a divine interdict was declared against their ever marrying again."

According to Muir, Mohammed had eleven wives, including two slave girls. The number seems uncertain. Abulfeda limits it to fifteen, while other Arabian historians make it as many as twenty-five. He limited his followers, however, to four wives each; but on account of the facility of divorce among them, though a man may never have more than four wives at one

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time, yet he may be married many times. A traveller once met an Arab, not an old man either, who had been married fifty times. We knew of a family where the first and second wives were permanent, but the changes kept taking place in Nos. 3 and 4.

When the Mohammedans invaded India, they brought the custom of the Zenana with them. They often forcibly added a beautiful Hindu woman to their households, even though she had a husband. Hence, to protect themselves from their unscrupulous Mohammedan neighbors, the Hindus began to keep their women indoors, and to veil them carefully. Miss Thoburn says: "Oriental women have always lived more or less in the background, but Mohammed shut them within four walls and turned the key." The custom prevails among Mohammedans wherever they are found in India, except the very poor whose wives are forced to labor as well as the husbands; and they often have only one room for all the family to live in. But, here and there, you find a poor man who even in his poverty clings with great pride to the system as tenaciously as his wealthier neighbors.

Among the Hindus the system prevails largely in Bengal, the North, and the Northwest; es-

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pecially where Mohammedanism is the strongest, and in the old Mohammedan capitals, and in the Mohammedan native states. In the Western and Southern portions of India, it only prevails to a certain extent among the better classes. With the exceptions of the royal families in the Marathi native states, the Zenana does not exist among the Marathi people. That no doubt accounts for the freedom of the women in the city of Bombay. A lady who lived in North India for several years, told us that she had seen more women on the streets in Bombay in one day than she had seen during all her stay in the North. The thing that struck us most on our first visit to the North was the small number of women we met on the streets.

While the Zenana system has not been adopted by the lower castes in the North, and not generally adopted by the Hindus of the West and South, yet it has affected public opinion and thereby restricted the liberty of women to a great extent throughout the country; and when you speak of the women of these sections being free, it must be remembered there are many limitations to their freedom.

We have no idea of the number of women who thus live in seclusion, but it is, we are glad

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to say, a small proportion of the whole number of more than 140,000,000 of women in India. But this fact does not lessen the wrong of the institution.

1. It deprives them of outdoor liberty and recreation, and must affect not only their own health, but that of their children. It is asserted that a large percentage of Zenana women die of consumption. Where the Zenana is very strictly kept, as at Hyderabad, the women and their young slave-attendants are practically prisoners, servants guard the front entrances to their apartments, and if the ladies make a call, or take a journey, the greatest precaution is taken to secure their seclusion. In Lucknow we have seen ladies borne past in closed palanquins over which was spread a covering of cloth. How stifling it must have been!

A Mohammedan gentleman in Bombay, accustomed to some laxity in his own household, told us that when he was in Northern India, he saw, on one occasion, a lady put in a closed railway carriage and then over the whole carriage was thrown a tent. "That," he added, "was a little too much Zenana for me." A Hindu gentleman who has lived in Hyderabad for many years, told us that when a wealthy Zenana lady

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wished to make a call, the street was cleared for her, and she was conveyed to her destination in a palanquin shielded by a cloth on both sides. He also said that once he had some workmen repairing a house, and as they worked on one high corner, they were discovered by the occupants of the Zenana below in the next house. The husband rushed out with a gun and would have fired, had not our friend interfered. They were suspected of climbing to that point so as to look into the Zenana.

2. It makes a woman constantly conscious of her sex. All this is done to shield her from the gaze of man. In ordinary Zenanas, if a water-carrier or other workman has to come into the Zenana court, warning is given so that the lady can flee to her room, or two servants hold up a cloth before her and screen her till the man passes out. The *Koran*, as quoted above, allows her to see her father, brothers and nephews in addition to her husband, and, as one lady added to us, "and an uncle if he is older than our father." But in very strict Zenanas this liberty, even, is much limited.

We know of a Mohammedan lady whose husband was absent. Through a lattice or window, she saw her little boy, an only child we think, in

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physical danger. Mother-love forgot every ban and she rushed into the street to rescue him. On her husband's return that evening, he was told of it and expressed no displeasure but spoke to her "words of honey." *But she was never seen after that night.* Another husband, of whom we know, killed his wife because a man by the merest accident saw her back through an open door, though she was unconscious of it. A lady described to us a pilgrimage to Mecca. She was confined to her cabin all through the voyage, while her husband enjoyed the ocean breezes from the deck and had the monotony of the voyage broken by whatever there was to see.

3. The confinement limits their experience of life to a very small horizon and keeps them children. If they cannot read, their knowledge of the outside world depends on hearsay. If a husband is so minded, he can greatly misrepresent events and the world to her. We recently heard of the statement made in a paper conducted in the interests of the Zenana, that the Western world was beginning to adopt the system.

4. The segregation of the sexes is a great evil. It was never the Creator's plan, but, guaging human nature, it was man's plan to save the purity of his wives and the sanctity of his home. But

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like all man's remedies for man, it is a failure. An author quoted in Dr. Murdoch's book says: "Instead of promoting virtue, it has tended to render the imagination prurient." Dr. Fallon scandalized the Anglo-Indian press with the quotations and proverbs used in his Hindustani-English Dictionary, but in defence he said: "There is much to be learned from many an otherwise objectionable quotation, if one is willing to learn. It is of the greatest importance, for instance, to know to what depths human nature can sink in the vitiated atmosphere of enforced female seclusion, as contrasted with the purity to which men and women rise as social restraints are withdrawn, and they are permitted to breathe the pure air of liberty and indulge in free social intercourse."

Miss Hewlett says: "The idea that because a woman is kept in seclusion she is more modest or womanly, is a sentiment without foundation in fact, as frequently where purdah is more strictly observed, the greatest impropriety prevails behind the scenes." "God meant the home," says Murdoch, "to be a place of intercourse, where husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, male and female relatives and friends, gather together round the same hearth in loving

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confidence and mutual dependence." It is the only safeguard of domestic happiness, and even of national blessing. Says Muir: "It is impossible for a people who, contrary to nature, exclude from their outer life the whole female sex, materially to rise in the scale of civilization. Men suffer from the loss of the refining influence of woman's society. In such society they cease to talk of what they do not want their wives and daughters to know and hear. We have known the basest man to check his oath or coarse jest, and drop into a reverential, confused silence in the presence of a refined woman. Let the sexes intermingle, and many men will become what they want their women to be."

A "Kashmiri Pandit," after residing some time in England, thus gives his experience in the *Indian Magazine:*

"To live for three or four years in a society in which men and women meet, not as *masters* and *slaves,* but as friends and companions—in which feminine culture adds grace and beauty to the lives of men; to live in a society in which the prosaic hours of hard work are relieved by the companionship of a sweet and educated wife, sister, or mother, is the most necessary discipline required by our Indian youths, in order that they

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may be able to shake off their old notions and to look upon an accomplished womanhood as the salt of human society which preserves it from moral decay. There is a very pernicious notion prevalent in India, that a free intercourse between the sexes leads to immorality. I confess that, before I came to England, I believed there was some truth in this notion. But now I believe no such thing. My own impression is, *that the chief safety-valve of public and private morality is the free intercourse between the sexes.*" This is the sore need of India, and we hope the purdah will soon be rent in twain, and woman be emancipated.

It is often suggested to us that the different denominations among Christians must be a great hinderance and stumbling-block in India. Some of our Indian contemporaries have learned this objection, and occasionally assail the missionaries and the cause of Christ with it, as if sects were unknown in India and unity of mind was a characteristic of the country. The difficulty should not be an incomprehensible one to an Indian mind. India is full of sects, so that in writing an article for the press, it is difficult to make a statement that covers all India, or even one of its divisions.

The Hindus are divided into innumerable sects

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that vary from one another in customs and even in dress. The Braham community consists of divisions and subdivisions that will not intermarry or eat together. This is also true of the Indian Reformers. We have the Brahmo-Samaj, the Arya-Samaj, the Prarthna-Samaj, and the Adi-Samaj. The *Arya-Messenger* has complained most bitterly of late of divisions in the camp and of the danger of greater splits; but when it was hinted that the Arya and Brahmo-Samaj unite, the thought was most indignantly resented. "Never!" said the *Messenger*, "why, the Brahmo-Samaj is only a kind of Christianity!"

When we turn to the Mohammedan community we find the same conditions there. True, the pious Moslem cries, "There is but one God, Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet," but with this general creed and the *Koran* we find them divided into Shias and Sunnias, and these are divided and subdivided until it has passed into a proverb that there are seventy-two sects of Mohammedans. Hence it is easy to see that in speaking of the Zenana, it is difficult to make general statements that would cover the whole Mohammedan community.

The customs and practices in North India are often very different from those of Bombay;

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while a different state of affairs from all other sections of India exists in the Hyderabad State, where perhaps the Zenana in its strictness, severity and style corresponds more with that of other Mohammedan countries. In Bombay the Zenana can be hardly said to have taken root at all. Strictly speaking, it does not exist among the Khojas. The women of other sects move about more or less freely. A glance at the house in Bombay is proof of this. In Lucknow houses are built with reference to the Zenana. The front of a house may look most unpretentious, but if you pass through into the rear, you will find an open court surrounded on its four sides with the women's apartments. In our rows of tall four and five story houses in Bombay, where do we find the court, and the Zenana? The land that makes the square court up north, would represent too much money to a shrewd Parsee, or a speculating Hindu investor; and he would run up a four or five-storied *chawl* on it. It is only in the bungalows with more or less of a compound, that the wealthy Mohammedan, the Arab, and the Persian finds a proper home for his Zenana among us. Perhaps our free Marathi atmosphere of Western India is unfavorable to the Zenana's growth.

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In speaking of the Zenana, Sir William Muir suggests that in addition to its being a command of Mohammed, that it may be a necessity to the system. He says: "With polygamy, concubinage, and arbitrary divorce, some such restraint may be necessary to check the loose matrimonial standard which might otherwise undermine the decencies of social life. But the institution of the veil has nevertheless chilled and checked all civilizing influences, and rendered rude and barbarous the Moslem world. The veil, and the other relations that make it necessary, are bound up together with the *Koran*, and from the *Koran* it is impossible for the loyal and consistent Moslem to turn aside."

It would be much easier for the Hindus to give up the custom, as it is not commanded by their sacred books and is only custom with them. In speaking to an Indian gentleman of Muir's suggestion that the Zenana holds the social fabric of the Mohammedans together, he said it was not true; that thousands of poor Mohammedans did not keep *purdah*, and that some communities were very lax in its observance, and yet there was no difficulty. "But," he added, "Mohammedans are considered the most immoral of nations, and it is the *Zenana* that has made them so."

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The Zenana

The seclusion of women is bad enough, but when intensified by polygamy, it is much worse. A man is allowed by the *Koran*, if he wishes and can support them, to have four wives and as many concubines as he likes. Perhaps the larger number of Mohammedans have only one wife, and an increasing number oppose polygamy; but many still avail themselves of the privilege. It is an expensive luxury. Most of the native princes have been polygamists. It is said that when the last King of Oude was deposed, that there were seven hundred women found in his harem. The majority of this number were no doubt servants and attendants of his wives, for even in some homes of one wife there are from ten to twenty attendants and servants.

If the polygamist has the means, he usually sets up a separate establishment for each wife: *i. e.*, a suite of rooms, a set of attendants, and a separate courtyard, though one large wall may enclose the whole. But where there can be no such arrangement, and the wives live together, it does not require a very great stretch of the imagination to know that there must often be unhappiness, and strife among them: as jealousy must play a part if the husband is more attentive to any one wife than to the others.

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Mohammed himself, had his favorite wife in Ayesha. There is an inherent desire in a woman's heart that, next to God, she shall be first in her husband's affections, and she naturally resents the thought of a rival. The system of polygamy has never been able to eradicate this desire. The fact that some polygamous families may live happily and peaceably under the rule of the head wife, is no proof to the contrary. A Mohammedan government official told us once that he had three wives: that his parents had chosen the first one; that she had no children, and they chose a second, and that he was so dissatisfied that he chose a third himself. "But," he added, "between the three, I live a life of it." The parents of young girls before they are married often take a written promise from the intended husbands that they will not take another wife. One young girl added in telling of this promise they had obtained: "And my intended husband is a good man and he will never do it." Said her friend in reply: "Yes, but a pious Mussalman is allowed four by the *Koran*." We knew of a wife whom the husband deceived for a long time. She thought she was the only wife, but was almost heart-broken when she discovered that he had another wife living in a little house not far away.

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Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop, the celebrated traveller in all lands, speaks even yet more strongly: "I have lived in Zenanas and can speak from experience, of what the lives of secluded women can be—the intellect so dwarfed that a woman of twenty or thirty is more like a child, while all the worst passions of human nature are developed and stimulated; jealousy, envy, murderous hate, intrigue running to such an extent that in some countries I have hardly ever been in a woman's house, without being asked for drugs to disfigure the favorite wife, or take away her son's life. This request has been made of me nearly one hundred times. This is a natural product of a system that we ought to have subverted long ago."

Among one sect there is a shameless custom of temporary marriage, which may be contracted for six, nine or twelve months, or for any period that may suit, even for a day. In our astonishment, we asked: "And are these marriages legal, and does the *Kazi* unite such couples?" The reply came in the affirmative. It was instituted by Mohammed Jaafel, sixth Iman from Ali. Some writer in referring to it speaks of it as a great blot upon the morals of Mohammedan social life.

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In addition to polygamy there is the custom of arbitrary divorce. A man may divorce his wife on any pretext and he need give her no reason if it so please him. In reading through the divorce law of Mohammedans, we were baffled and bewildered by what seemed to us the petty discriminations in the terms used in divorcing a wife. The first chapter opens up with the sentence; "There are thirteen different kinds of separation of married parties, of which seven require a judicial decree and six do not." We at last understand this, that when a man had repeated the words of divorce, "*talaq*," three times it was irrevocable. And not until the wife had been married to another man and divorced again, could the first husband remarry her. A wife cannot usually divorce her husband, but she can ask him to divorce her; and unless he choose to do it, she cannot be released.

There are many checks to divorce, and one is that the husband is required before marriage to make a settlement upon the bride called "mahr." and that he cannot divorce her without paying this. In well-to-do communities, it is fixed at from one thousand to fifteen hundred rupees; but to make it impossible to divorce her we have heard of the sum being put at a very fanciful

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figure. We read of one case where it was set at twenty-six thousand rupees; and the other day we heard of a young clerk on a salary of ten rupees per month signing an agreement to a "mahr" of three lacs of rupees. Though Mohammedanism sanctions a loose system of divorce, yet in India it is greatly limited in practice as compared with other Mohammedan countries. There are whole sections of its society in which it is rarely found; and in certain portions of the country this is true even among the better classes. If it did not affect the lot of woman so sorely in making domestic happiness insecure, we would have been glad to have overlooked the subject altogether.

In conclusion we must say that the Zenana, aside from its being a Mohammedan institution, is at present in India largely a custom, a fashion, and a standard of respectability. The majority of women in the Zenanas do not look upon themselves as martyrs to an evil custom; but, says a writer, "It has now become to Indian ladies part and parcel of their creed. Modesty, in a word, is to them as the very breath of their nostrils. To do away with it is a violation of one of the virtues of a woman."

They even take a great pride in their seclusion.

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The custom has become a token of great respectability. Dr. Murdoch quotes Miss Bielby, as saying: "A man's social standing in his own class depends, in a great measure, upon whether he can afford to keep his wife and daughters in Zenana or not." We have known of families who have lost wealth and become very poor; and the women have been forced from behind the purdah by great suffering to seek to earn a livelihood. It has been to them like parting with their respectability to do it. We knew of a Hindu lady who had never left the house but once, and that was to go to her husband's house as a bride. With what pride she must have viewed such intense respectability.

Hindu women have a little more laxity than Mohammedans in going on pilgrimages and to bathing ghauts. The *chadar* well drawn down over the face preserves the purdah for them. It is amusing to know that in Benares the purdah is most strictly kept. A prime-minister of some native state came to Benares and drove about with his wife in a carriage, when he was asked by the Hindus to desist from it. Marathi and Guzerati ladies on going to Benares to live, go into seclusion. We know of one such Guzerati lady who came to Bombay on a visit and went

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about the city freely. On her return to Benares in the seclusion of her purdah she laughingly told a lady: "Oh, when I was in Bombay, I went about the streets with a bag in my hands just as you do." A friend writing from Guzerat, in speaking of the seclusion of Hindu ladies there says: "Amongst Hindus other than Rajputs and the better class *Kunbis* (cultivators), the Zenana custom is very little in vogue. However there is a tendency among the wealthier families of all classes to affect the Zenana seclusion. It is coming to be considered fashionable and good form for the ladies in the houses of the rich."

But it is said that women are contented in their seclusion. This is true. So is the canary, that was born in the cage and never tasted the sweets of the free air. It is also asserted that the women are not clamoring for emancipation. But these statements, though true, do not in any way lessen the evil of the system to woman and to society; and we earnestly hope that it will soon be done away.

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VI

MURALIS

We have in our possession a small band of black cloth on which are sewn seven cowries, the necklace of the *Murali.* Our first knowledge of this class of persons was given us years ago in a very practical way. A servant in whom we were much interested had a little niece of about nine years of age who had been married to a sword. We had heard all about the wedding, and how the wee child had, at last, fainted through sheer fatigue during the long festivities.

But why was she married to a sword, and whose sword was it? Slowly the truth dawned upon us. We found that the sword or dagger belonged to the god Khandoba, and that inevitable moral ruin awaited the child. She was a *Murali.* We were greatly shocked, but to our remonstrances, the servant had but one reply: "It is our custom." We became possessed with a desire to save the child from the life that surely awaited her. The servant finally brought her to us, and she was put in a school. A few years later, in spite of our efforts to prevent it, the girl

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was removed by her relatives, and is now a young woman living a life of shame, supporting her mother with her earnings. We never see her, but we think of what she might have been, and the words come unbidden:

> "Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
> The saddest are these, 'it might have been.'"

Now what are *Muralis* and who is Khandoba, this Indian Blue-beard? There has been considerable agitation on the subject of late, and we will try to answer these two questions for our readers.

Khandoba is a deity of the Marathi country, and is popularly believed to be an *avatar*, or incarnation of Shiva. *Muralis* are girls devoted to him by their parents in infancy or early childhood. The custom is confined to the Marathi country, with the exception of the Konkon, but it has its counterparts under different names in other parts of the country, as in the Devadasis of South India, and in the Jogtins, Bhaoins and others.

1. The headquarters of the worship of Khandoba is at Jejuri in the Poona district. There is also another place of worship called Pali in the Satara district; and we have been told of a third

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at Agalgaon, sacred to one of Khandoba's wives; but of the latter we could get but little information.

A friend who is an authority on this subject has given us the following account: "Jejuri is a small village situated at the foot of a little hill. The temple on its top, and the general surroundings, remind one of Parvati at Poona. The temple of Khandoba closely resembles the temple of Parvati with the exception of its glittering, gold-plated crown.

"The shepherds of the Marathi country are special favorites of Khandoba, because one of his wives was a shepherd girl. She was probably a young widow whom he secured and kept shut up for some time, calling her his brother's wife. But after a while he wooed and won her, and carried her to his home at Jejuri on horseback.

"A little temple on the stairway is sacred to Banai, the shepherd girl who was his favorite wife. In the courtyard facing the inner temple stands a big image of a demon who is named Bali Malla. It was to kill this Bali Malla that the god Shiva took a *Khanda* or dagger in his hand, and in this way received the title Khandoba. A little book called *Malhari Mahatmya* tells the

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same story in a more elaborate manner. Malla was a terrible demon who used to vex the *Rishis* living on the top of this hill now crowned with Khandoba's temple. They complained to the king of the gods, but he was powerless. Then all the gods went to Shiva, and besought protection from Malla. Shiva plucked a lock of hair from his head, struck the ground with it in great fury, and created a female demon to fight with the Malla and this army of powerful demons. But this fury required some one else to help her. So Martand Bhairav, one of Shiva's chiefs, offered to fight Malla. He took his seventy millions of evil spirits to help him in the battle. This is the origin of the phrase, 'Khandoba's *yelkot*' which means seventy millions. The favorite title of Khandoba, the head of the seventy million evil spirits, is very appropriate, *considering the deeds ascribed to him, and what is still done through his devotees.*

"There is a stone in the courtyard that has seven cuts in it which are supposed to be the marks left by the blows of his sword when he struck at his elder wife, Mhalsai, who was angry with him for marrying and bringing home Banai, the shepherd girl. Khandoba punished her in his anger by striking at her seven times with his

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sword; but she hid herself under the rock and was saved. So we see that Khandoba is a model husband whose example is so often imitated by our Marathi people who offend their wives in many ways, and then punish the poor woman for being angry with them.

"The present temple is not the original residence of Khandoba. It was built by Ahalyabai, the Queen of Indore, (who also has become a goddess, because she was so very good, and is now worshipped all over the country, though more especially in the Marathi country). She besought him to come down from the top of the Kade Pathar (the old Jejuri hill) to reside in this temple built by her, so that he could be easily reached by the weak, blind, and lame pilgrims who visit his shrine. The old temple is still visited by some, but this modern shrine receives the general pilgrimages which take place four times in the year—when great bodies of pilgrims visit the temple and pay homage to Khandoba."

2. Who are the *Muralis?*

"Outside the main entrance of the temple court, a stone column stands against the wall on the left side. It is about three feet high, and on the head of it is cut a filthy design. The column is called by the name of Yeshwantrao, who is

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supposed to be a great god that gives the pilgrims all they want. He it is who gives children to barren women.

"It is to this image that poor deluded women promise to sacrifice their firstborn daughters if Khandoba will make them mothers of many children. Then after the vow, the firstborn girl is offered to Khandoba and set apart for him by tying a necklace of seven cowries around the little girl's neck. When she becomes of marriageable age, she is formally married to the *khanda* or dagger of Khandoba and becomes his nominal wife. Henceforth she is forbidden to become the wedded wife of man, and the result is that she usually leads an infamous life, earning a livelihood by sin. Some of these girls become wandering *muralis*. Others become ordinary public women in any town or city; while a few are said to live for years with some one man.

"The parents of such girls do not feel ashamed to take her earnings, *because they belong to Khandoba, and what they do is not sin in the eyes of his devotees.* Kunbis, Mahars, Mangs and other low castes make *muralis* of their daughters in this fashion. Not a few high-caste people visit Jejuri to pay their vows; but they never give their own girls to Khandoba, but buy

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children from low-caste parents for a small sum of money, which is not a difficult thing to do, and offer them instead of their own children."

The vow is frequently made in their own homes in their native villages, and is often made in the case of sickness, that if the god restores the sick one, their child shall be offered to Khandoba. When the vow is made, yellow powder is rubbed on the child and the cowrie necklace put on. When a suitable time arrives, there is a pilgrimage made to Jejuri and the marriage takes place there with the dagger of the idol which is kept in the temple. But if the family are unable to make the journey, the ceremony is performed at home.

"The business of the *murali* is to sing impure songs in praise of Khandoba; to perform night worship and song-services in honor of their gods at different places; and they earn their living in this way. A manuscript book purchased from a *murali* was full of these filthy songs, which are sung in the night services and are called *Jagrane*, or night watches.

"From earliest childhood their minds are corrupted by singing these songs in Khandoba's praise. To these they add other similar songs for the entertainment of their patrons at whose

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houses they are invited to hold night services. So long as they are young and attractive there are many calls for them, and their parents receive large sums of money and other presents. But the life soon stamps its awful mark upon them, and their sad, pale faces can but excite the pity of the compassionate."

Boys are also devoted to Khandoba and are called *waghyas*. They wear a little tiger-skin wallet suspended from their necks. They are popularly spoken of as Khandoba's dogs. They are allowed to marry, and do not necessarily lead a wandering life unless they choose. The wandering ones are usually disreputable.

We have been unable to get any statistics as to the number of *muralis*. At Jejuri alone we are told that about one hundred girls are offered every year, and in some years more. In one town where we lived for years, in the midst of a population of ten thousand people, there were two hundred and eighty *muralis* registered by the police. These two facts give us a little clue to the many hundreds of girls, all over the Marathi country, who have been devoted to this shameful life.

You may search far and wide, and the only reason for this awful crime against young girls

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that you will receive is: "It is our custom." Just how old the custom is, no one knows. It is said not to be mentioned in the sacred books, but the principle, under different names, has existed in India from time immemorial. The *Puranas* mention *nautch-girls*, and also speak of public women at certain places who seem to be identical with the present *devadasis*, or temple girls. Custom and religion cannot be separated in this land. Custom is religion. Present customs, however ancient or modern they may be, make up popular Hinduism.

At the last yearly meeting of the Christian Woman Workers' Union, held in Bombay, the matter was taken up, with the view of calling the attention of government to the facts. Carefully collected information as to the custom has been laid before a firm of solicitors in this city by a committee from the Bombay Missionary Conference, to whom the ladies of the Union referred the matter; and the questions asked if any member of the public could rescue a "murali" who was under age from the life to which she had been devoted, through a court of law; and also, if a member of the public should succeed in getting possession of the person of a "murali" under age, could her parents or any one else take

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the child away again, if it had been proven that the sole object of the one who rescued her, was to save her from a life of sin.

The solicitors replied that they thought the object could be attained under Section 372 and 373 of the Indian Penal Code in cases of minors under sixteen years of age. These sections provide that persons disposing of minors for evil purposes, "or knowing that any minor will be so used," shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. The committee add to this the hope that this reply "will be made use of, on the one hand, to deter those purposing to marry their daughters to Khandoba; and, on the other hand, by leading to the rescue of girls from the sad life before them. It is an exceedingly important point to be kept in mind that, in the act of marrying their daughters to Khandoba, parents lose the right of guardianship, and a third party can step in to assume the place, provided it is for the girl's rescue."

The difficulty in the above is, that it will require time, a great deal of disinterested effort, and the expense attendant upon it. Who will make the prosecutions? Will it be left to a few missionaries? Or will the educated classes co-

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operate? Perhaps a half dozen prosecutions will break the back of the custom in larger towns and cities, but what of the hundreds of villages away from such influences?

But the matter should not be allowed to rest here. The custom is a blot on society and a wrong to women, and should be abolished. Laws in other lands protect the rights of infants and minors. The crime of the *Murali* question is that thousands of girls, before they are born, or while still infants and mere children, are placed in a position that compels them to become moral and physical wrecks; and the heinousness of it is enhanced by its being done in the name of religion.

In one district where missionary work has existed for fifty years, and where there is a large number of Christians from the *Mahar* community, the custom has almost disappeared. Over and over again, as we have penned this chapter, have we thought of the promise in Ezekiel: "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

An Indian lady, who has recently written on this subject, says: "I have felt sick at heart, as I have thought of the thousands of *muralis* whose blood has been shed on the altar of the leader of

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seventy million devils. Khandoba is truly the Beelzebub of the Marathi country. Let us pray to Him who has promised to cleanse us from all our uncleanness, to cleanse the land from all its cruel and filthy customs." To this prayer we are sure our readers will say, Amen!

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VII

DEVADASIS

MANY people outside of India, when they hear of Hindu temples, imagine them to be houses of worship, where the people of the town, men, women and children, regularly assemble for worship. They suppose that here the idol is worshipped; that offerings are made to it; that prayers are made and praises sung to the image; and that the priests instruct the people from the Hindu *shastras* or scriptures. They form this idea from their knowledge of Christian churches and worship. It is true that in the different reform movements we find them gathering in a church or hall, with a service modelled after the Christian form of worship; assembling on stated days and at stated hours. We have often passed Prarthana Samaj *Mandir* in Bombay on a Sabbath afternoon, and through the open window witnessed a gentleman preaching to the audience from a pulpit or stand.

But of Hinduism, pure and simple, this ideal of worship, held by many of our Western friends, is as far from the truth as the North from the South

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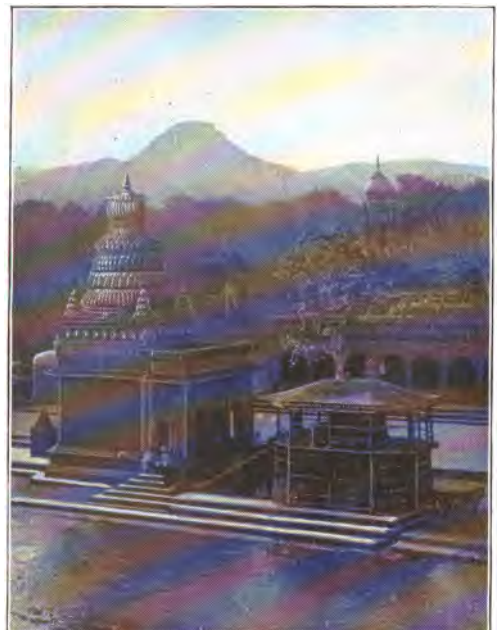
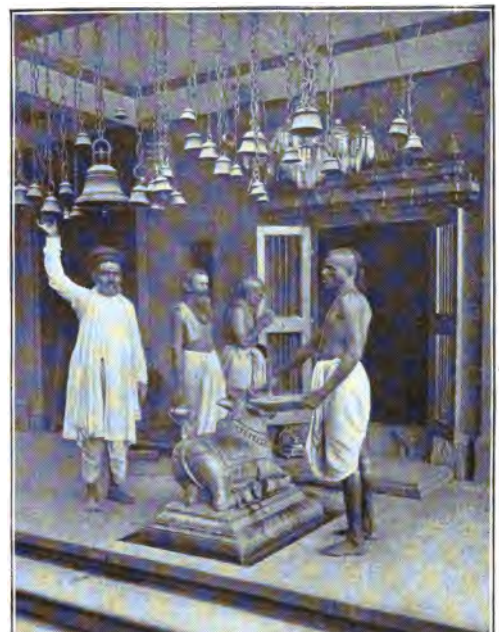


HINDU TEMPLES



WORSHIPING THE IDOL

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pole. The vast majority of Hindu temples are small, usually not more than eight by ten feet in size, with just room enough for the idol and the priest who cares for it. In many a village the god is a shapeless stone, daubed with red paint, set up under a green tree, or in some niche in a wall, and the withered flowers and broken cocoanut shells scattered about may be the only indication of worship to the casual passer-by; but, says Wilkins, "it is as carefully treated by its priest as the elaborately carved idol in a beautiful temple, and is as devoutly worshipped by the villagers."

To more pretentious temples there may be attached a large *mandap*, or hall, where the people assemble to listen to the *Kirtans* or *Kathas* recited by the *haridas*. These *Kirtans* and *Kathas* are dramatical and historical recitations of the exploits and doings of different gods. If there is not this *mandap*, the people gather under a tree in the temple yard on a raised earthen platform and listen to the *puranik* read the *shastras*. If the temple is a large one, the idol is always in a smaller inner room, or shrine, with an open door in front of it. The point to be observed is that the worship in the temple is never that of a community or body, but of the individual. Each per-

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son comes, brings his offering, makes his vow or whatever is in his mind in coming, and then makes the circuit of the shrine any number of times from five to a hundred or more as suits his zeal. Low-castes are not admitted to the temples. The priest must always be a Brahman, but is often illiterate, only knowing by heart a few Sanskrit texts and *mantras*. He never instructs the people in the *shastras*, and is often avaricious and unscrupulous. Rev. Dr. Bradford, in a recent issue of the New York *Independent*, quotes one of the *Swamis* from India, who was in America last year, as acknowledging to him that there are immoralities and vices connected with the temple worship in India, but he added: "*The temple worship is one thing, and religious teaching is another thing.*"

In addition to the local temples in the cities, towns and villages, there are temples at the sacred places all over the country visited by thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the land, and in the visiting of which special merit or salvation is supposed to be attained. With the names of many of the most noted, Benares, Kali Ghat at Calcutta, Gya, Puree, Rameshwar and others, our readers are familiar. In Dr. Murdoch's description of Puree, we find that the temple of

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Jagannath, the "lord of the world," is composed of four distinct buildings opening one into the other. The first is about eighty feet square and one hundred and twenty feet in height. This is the cook-room, where food is cooked before the god and sold to the pilgrims as holy. This building opens into another called the dancing hall, where the musicians and dancing-girls amuse the god. This opens in turn into the next building that is called the audience chamber, from which the pilgrims look into the last building which is the shrine, where sits the idol himself.

Many of the large temples we have seen are covered with sculptures of different figures, some of them very finely executed, some of them fantastic, and some quite rude. On some of the temples the figures are extremely indecent. There are a great number of statues of men and women in the niches and recesses of the audience chamber at Puree, a few of which are said to be disgustingly obscene. Similar sculptures are said to be found in many of the temples in South India. In proof of this we have only to quote Section 292 of the Penal Code:—"292. Whosoever sells or distributes, imports or prints for sale or hire, or willfully exhibits to public

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view, any obscene book, pamphlet, paper, drawing, painting, representation, or figure, or attempts or offers so to do, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both."

But the following *exception* is made:

"This section does not extend to any representation sculptured, engraved, painted or otherwise represented on or in any temple, or on any car used for the conveyance of idols, or kept or used for any religious purpose."

The *Indian Social Reformer*, according to Dr. Murdoch, makes the following excellent commentary on the above:

"With Edmund Burke we have no notion of a geographical morality. What is immoral in England is immoral in India. The Calcutta Legislative Council, however, seems to be of a different opinion. It believes in a local morality. It has solemnly decided that what is immoral in the shop is not immoral in the temple; that what is immoral in a carriage is not immoral in a car. One would almost suppose that our legislators were orthodox Hindus of the first water.

"There is a saying in the Hindu *shastras* that 'the mighty are not to be blamed.' It is on this

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ethical formula that Hindus exculpate their gods from the charge of immorality. Our legislators have, it seems, adopted this principle. What is a punishable crime in us poor mortals, is no punishable crime in the gods. If an obscene print were stuck on our carriage we should be imprisoned or fined or both; if the ugly stump of a divinity, dignified with the appellation of 'the lord of the world,' were to exhibit a thousand libidinous pictures on its car, it would not be recognizable as a punishable crime in the proprietors of that divinity. They could still go on corrupting the public morals, offending the public taste, under the sanction of the Legislative Council."

In connection with this temple there is quite an establishment. Dr. Murdoch says: "About six hundred and forty persons are required to fill up all the appointments, of which a few may be mentioned. There is the officer who takes Jagannath to his bed; another who wakes him; one who gives him water and a toothpick to wash his face and cleanse his mouth; an officer to give him rice; another to give him betel; a washerman to wash his clothes; an officer to count his robes; another to carry his umbrella; another to tell him the hours of worship. Besides all these there are about four hundred fami-

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lies of cooks *and one hundred and twenty dancing-girls.*"

It is to these women that we wish to direct attention. Dubois says of them that, "next to the sacrificers, they are the most important persons about the temple." They are known by the name of Temple-girls or *devadasis.* Notwithstanding these at Puree, and a few in other parts of India, the real home of the *devadasi* is in South India. The word means the servants or slaves of the gods. They receive a certain allowance, usually small and nominal, from the revenue of the temple. Their duty is to sing and dance before the temple gods, and in the idol processions. Madura, Trichinopoly, Srirangam, Shrirangapatan, Tripati, Kumbakonam, Udapi, and many other towns in Southern India, have large and ancient temples dedicated to various gods, and have *devadasis* connected with them. According to the Madras census report of 1881, there were 11,573 women "dancers" in the Presidency.

A friend writes to us as follows: "The gods in the Hindu heavens are not satisfied with having one or more wives of their own, they also have a number of public women, called *Apsaras,* who dance and sing and add to the comfort of

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the gods. According to Hindu belief, men who have performed meritorious deeds go to heaven, and their chief happiness consists in the enjoyment of the society of the *Apsaras*. The *devadasis* are the counterpart of the *Apsaras* on earth!"

Whatever may, in the very beginning, have been the conception of thus devoting girls to gods and temple service, it is now, and has been for centuries, a most debasing custom. They are invariably courtesans sanctioned by religion and society. Dr. Murdoch quotes the dancing-girls of Orissa as saying, in a memorial to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, that they "are greatly needed in pujas and the auspicious performances, and the entertainment of them is closely connected with the management of temples and shrines; from which it is evident that their existence is so related to the Hindu religion that its ceremonies cannot be fully performed without them." He also quotes *The Hindu* as affirming "that the demoralization it causes is immense. So long as we allow it to be associated with our temples and places of worship, we offend and degrade our religion and nationality. The loss and misery it has entailed on many a home is merely indescribable."

These girls are the common property of the

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priests. Wicked men visit the temple, ostensibly to worship, but in reality to see these women. And what shall we say of the simple-minded, but well-to-do pilgrim, should he fall under their power? He will probably return to his home a ruined man. That a temple, intended as a place of worship, and attended by hundreds of simple-hearted men and women, should be so polluted, and that in the name of religion, is almost beyond belief; and that Indian boys should grow up to manhood, accustomed to see immorality shielded in these temples with a divine cloak, makes our hearts grow sick and faint.

Along with this sad story of wrong to Indian womanhood from South India, we have an equally dark one, though in different dress, of the *Vaishnavis* from Brindaban in the North. This city is one of those places held sacred to the god, Krishna. When the reader recalls the awful character of Krishna, our story will easily be accredited. From childhood to old age he was morally bad; he was disobedient, dishonest and untruthful; as a man he was the incarnation of impurity. He is said to have had eight queens and sixty one hundred wives. In Benares there is a temple dedicated to Radha-Krishna, and "Radha-Krishna" is the formula you will hear

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men repeating in their religious exercises. But this Radha was not his wife, but his mistress. Is it strange, then, that his followers are amongst the most immoral of all the Hindus? Bishop Caldwell says that "the stories related of Krishna's life, do more than anything to destroy the morals and corrupt the imaginations of Hindu youth." At the door of this god, too, can be laid the corruption and ruin of thousands of women.

One of the sects of his followers is called the Chaitanya sect. Chaitanya lived four hundred years ago. He was famous for his learning and poetical abilities; and above all for his devotion to Krishna. His followers believed that he was an incarnation of Krishna. He chiefly dwelt at Nuddea. Reformers sometimes try to interpret his writings in the most sublime and spiritual manner; but the practical working out of his teachings in the lives of his followers at Nuddea and Brindaban, is the best interpretation. His followers worship Krishna, and try to be like him in every respect. Men forsake home and relatives to come and live in these sacred places. They live chiefly in the temples, and many lead most immoral lives. From these places, like all sacred places, agents are sent throughout the

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country by the priests to induce the people to make pilgrimages to the several shrines. Said a widow to us: "*These emissaries of the priests hunt for poor destitute widows at the same time.*" And she added: "When we arrived at Brindaban, the priests of the place met us at the railway station, and got us a house which was so filthy we could not endure it. We then sought for another, and found a good one belonging to a Mahant. When he saw us women, he was very anxious for us to stay, but we knew what it meant and left immediately. We finally stayed in a dirty house where many respectable pilgrims had taken their abode. These agents tell the widows whom they seek in the villages and the towns, that they will go right to heaven if they will only go to these sacred places and live there and serve the *sadhus* or saints, and worship Krishna. The poor ignorant women are easily persuaded to leave their homes, as many of them are very unhappy in them, and they think it is far better to go and live and die there serving and pleasing Krishna. Thus hundreds of widows, young and old, go to Mathura and Brindaban, and fall into the snares of the priests. They soon spend the little they have in giving alms and presents to the priests. And when all is

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spent, they cannot return to their native places even if they wish to do so. Their last resort is to go about begging for food, and if they are young and tolerably good-looking, the priests, the mahants, the *sadhus* and mendicants are all after them, and get them to live in their houses, first as servants, and then as mistresses; or they hire them out to other men in towns and villages near. If the women are unwilling to lead immoral lives, they are told that it is no sin to live thus in these sacred places, for these places are the chosen abode of Krishna, and he is always pleased with those followers who imitate him, who live happily as he and Radha lived. When these women get old, or displeasing to the men, they are turned out and have to shift for themselves; ragged, helpless, physical wrecks, seeming forsaken of all. They are often left to die like dogs. We went around the town at almost all hours with open eyes and saw the condition of these women. There were hundreds of widows who had come mostly from Bengal. The sin and misery, and the heartless cruelty of man to woman which we saw there on every side, is beyond description!"

We marvel at the long-suffering of God as He daily beholds this modern Sodom. And we

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wonder at man, even, who knows these wrongs and can keep silent. It is true, Brindaban is a long way from many of us. But what if your sisters and daughters were among these widows? What then?

In Western India there is another class called *Bhavins*, who are peculiar to the Konkon and Goa; and the name, says a Hindu writer, is "applied to women in the service of the idols in temples in Goa and places round about, and in parts of the Konkon. Some of these women are presented to the gods in infancy by their parents, as the *muralis* are. Their business is to attend the temple lamps, and keep them trimmed; to sweep and smear the floor; to turn the chauri over the idol; serve the *hunka* to the congregation; and to serve the visitors of the temple. They always trim the lamps with their fingers, and not with small sticks as other Hindus do. The trimming of the lamp with the fingers by any other than a Bhavin is supposed to bring poverty; and this is particularly observed in all Hindu houses."

These women are descendants of pure Marathans, but of all these different classes of women they seem to be the lowest, and to be held in such contempt, that it has passed into a proverb;

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and because "they have degraded themselves to the post of 'temple cats,' they have seats allotted to them behind the temples, while the *Naikin* or nautch-girl dances before the gods, in the gatherings of the great, and has a seat allotted to her before the gods." Some of them are in possession of landed property which has been given to them for their maintenance. These *Bhavins*, *Muralis*, *Jogtins* and others, seem to be considered a lower order of being than the *devadasi* or the nautch-girl; but, under whatever name these women pass, and however much the details of the customs among them may differ, *the principle is the same in all, immorality under the shelter of religion and custom.*

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VIII

THE NAUTCH-GIRL

THE institution of the nautch-girl is a very ancient one, coming down to Hindu society from very early times. In confirmation of the antiquity and religious sanction of this custom an Indian friend who is a competent authority writes us: "The description of Krishna performing pilgrimages, going to bathe in sacred rivers or seas, taking with him thousands of harlots to dance and sing in his presence, establishes the fact that nautches and nautch-girls were favored by him. In the Mahabharata and Puranas there are many instances where reference is made to this practice having been countenanced by incarnate gods and holy men."

We also find, in an old issue of the *Indian Social Reformer*, the following paragraph: "Even in the days of Krishna, the nautch-girl had her place. For we read in Bhagavatam (in the descriptions given by the poet regarding the welcome given to Krishna on his return to his native town after the wars of the Mahabharata): . . . 'And there also advanced in chariots,

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hundreds of *courtesans, fairest of their class,* with their cheeks glowing with the reflected brightness of their earrings, all eager to behold him; and also actors, dancers, singers, scholars in antique lore, eulogists and bards chanting the wonderful achievements of him whose praise dispels darkness.'"

In South India the *devadasi* and the nautch-girl are identical; but not so in Western and Central India, where these girls seem to form a separate class or caste called *Kalawantin,* and are identified with the temple service, but visit the temples only by invitation of the temple authorities for a performance. They are professional singers and dancers, and their performances may consist of singing and dancing, or singing alone. They are said to be invariably courtesans, and differ from the common public women, and even from the *Murali, Fogtin,* and *Bhavins,* who are also devoted to the gods, in that from time immemorial they have had a religious and social status given them, and are considered a necessity in the temple and in the home on marriage and other festive occasions.

The nautch-girl often begins her career of training under teachers as early as five years of age. She is taught to read, dance and sing, and

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instructed in every seductive art. Her songs are usually amorous; and while she is yet a mere girl, before she can realize fully the moral bearings of her choice of life, she makes her *debut* as a nautch-girl in the community by the observation of a shocking custom which is in itself enough to condemn the whole system.

As a large proportion of these women are childless, their ranks are reinforced by adoption of little girls who are bought or obtained in other ways. Illegitimate children are often passed on to them, and in the periodical famines that occur in this country, large numbers of girls find a home with this class of persons. Besides we are told that occasionally young widows go over to them. The young widow sees these dancing girls honored, gaily and richly dressed, with plenty of jewels, their presence propitious at weddings, while they, poor things, know that their own presence is often unpropitious and not desired, that they are not honored, that jewels and bright clothes are denied them, and it is not strange that they should be tempted to make this exchange of life.

For centuries dancing-girls had the monopoly of all the education among women. They were the only women that were taught to read and

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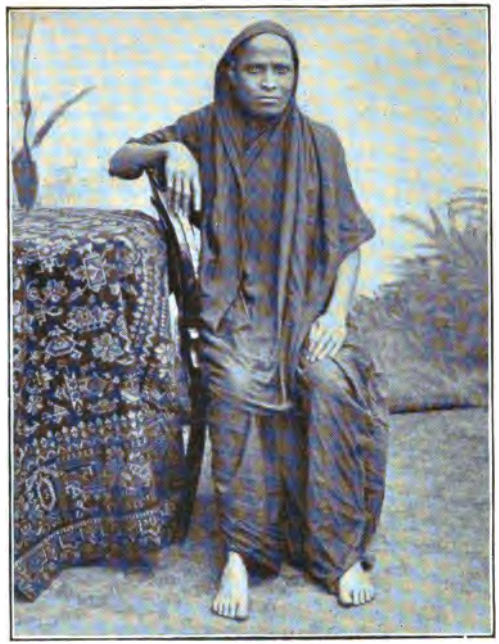
NAUTCH GIRLS



AN ELDERLY WIDOW

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sing in public in the country; and hence these two accomplishments were so associated with the nautch-girl as to be considered disreputable for respectable women. In the early days of female education in this century, one of the stock objections of the opposers was: "It is not respectable for girls to be educated." Now and then, you may still find an old person that clings to that feeling and associates learning in his mind with the nautch-girl. Over twenty years ago, we called on the wife of a prosperous Brahman government official. She was a thorough woman of the old type, but she had a beautiful little girl of about seven, who gathered her skirts tight about her as we passed her, for fear they might touch ours. In the course of conversation, we asked the mother if the child might learn to read: and we shall never forget the look and tone of scorn of the woman's reply at the suggestion. It embodied all that the words would have conveyed: "Do you think I am going to train my girl for a nautch-girl?" And yet, strange to say, had this very mother been arranging to marry her little girl, she would have readily assented perhaps, that a nautch-girl should be invited to give touch and finish to the wedding festivities. That particular form of prejudice is now becom-

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ing a thing of the past as regards learning, but no Hindu girls are receiving a musical education, and thus redeeming and rescuing this art from the hands of courtesans.

A friend of ours who has a large school of Indian girls, and who has them taught singing, has often been asked if she is going to teach them to dance also; showing how the association of singing in public is still connected in many minds with the nautch-girl. At a recent Zenana party which we attended, a young Christian girl whose father had been a Brahman, stepped forward in the bright company and sang a Marathi solo. It was a beautiful hymn, and her sweet clear voice, carried without break through each verse, accompanied by an exquisitely modest manner, gave us a hint of what Indian women may accomplish when once trained singing is divorced from immorality.

It frequently happens that these dancing-girls are rich, beautiful and very attractive, besides being witty and pleasant in conversation; and they are the only women that move freely in men's society in India. Dr. Murdoch quotes the *Indian Messenger* (a Calcutta paper), as saying: "We have seen with our own eyes these women introduced into respectable circles in open day-

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light, and men freely associating with them, while the ladies of the house were watching the scene from a distance as spectators and not taking part in the social pleasures going on before them, in which the dancing-girls were the only female participators. Could anything more detrimental to the cause of morality be conceived? In the Punjab, the dancing-girls enjoy public favor; they move more freely in native society than public women in civilized countries are ever allowed to do. In fact, greater attention and respect is shown to them than to married ladies. In the Northwest Provinces we have seen a dancing-girl treated with as much courtesy as if she were a princess descended from a distinguished royal line."

A few years ago, a writer in *The Times* said: "The ample earnings obtained by the dancing-girl, and the comparative luxury in which she lives, unfortunately renders the profession an attractive one. It is said in reference to this class in Lucknow, that a first-class nautch-woman may have jewels and lace of value from one thousand to ten thousand rupees; that her fee for singing for one night is fifteen rupees; and that on the occasion of a birth or marriage, it may be as much as two hundred." In Bombay a nautch-

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girl commands from twenty-five to sixty rupees a night for singing. Dr. Murdoch tells of a man who squandered 10,000 rupees on a wedding of which 2,000 went for nautch-girls. We have heard of them receiving as high as 500 rupees for one entertainment, but it must have been by some "star" in her profession. A girl may also, by her beauty or special accomplishments, become famous. A few years ago, such a girl came to Bombay from Central India and set the native community all agog to hear and see her. They are as a rule avaricious, and Dr. Murdoch says:

"Very large sums are often wasted on these women by men who will not give a pice for female education. Some time ago a jewel, set with precious stones valued at about 2,000 rupees, was presented to a dancing-girl in the neighborhood of Madras. Such payments, however, form only a part of the expenses connected with such women. The sight of one of them at a public performance creates a desire for private intercourse. Such visits are never welcome unless accompanied by gifts. A well-informed correspondent of the *Indian Social Reformer* writes: 'It is saddening to see royal and aristocratic families irretrievably ruined by these

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women. Many a wealthy man has had to court poverty and disgrace on this account. Even in middle class society, many fritter away their youth and money to quench the insatiable thirst of sanctified immorality. . . . Not long ago, in this district, a Brahman lad made a present of 4,000 rupees worth of landed property to a dancing-woman, while another spent his extensive property, and stands to-day on the awful verge of bankruptcy and ruin. Be it remembered that such occurrences take place in every important town in India. When the poor victim has lost everything, he is rejected, as the skin of a fruit which has been sucked is thrown away."

Many a family's happiness has been ruined, and estrangement made complete between husband and wife, by the husband coming under the power and influence of the nautch-girl. But our readers may say that this may occur in any land. That is true; but the nautch-girl has a recognized place in society and religion that gives her a peculiar vantage ground. In South India she has her right and place in the temple. In Western India she is there by invitation; and in society, all over India, she is everywhere. Never having married, she can never be a widow. Hence her presence at weddings is considered most aus-

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picious. And in Western India, in certain circles, if her presence can be afforded, *she* is the one that ties the wedding necklace; (equivalent to putting on the wedding ring with us), thus her defiled hands become a bright omen that the girl-bride may never be a widow. Aside from weddings, she graces many another festive occasion, such as the tread ceremony, house warmings, and evening parties and entertainments.

It is in his own father's house, where her presence sanctioned by his own father and mother, and by the presence of the company and applause of the leading men of the community, that many a young man has become fascinated with a bright dancing-girl; a fascination which has become the stepping-stone to his moral and financial ruin as he seeks her further acquaintance. What matters it if his young wife's heart breaks? What is the harm in it? Father and mother and the best society, and the temple authorities sanction this course. It is not sin and wrong, but simply custom.

In view of the character of these women, it seems like the keenest irony to say that they are often in requisition to complete the programme to bid farewell to some government official, or to entertain the viceroy, governors and other of-

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ficials, or to honor some European traveller. In extenuation we will say that many European ladies and gentlemen do not understand the real character of the nautch-girl who performs before them, or they feel it is a Hindu's idea of giving them pleasure; and after he, their host, has gone to so much expense, they shrink from offending him by expressing displeasure. Besides they do not understand the songs the girl sings, and hence are not shocked.

Quite a breeze was created last August at the entertainment of a high English official in Tanjore, when two nautch-girls began to sing a low song in English which called for a strong protest. If Europeans, both ladies and gentlemen, from the viceroy down, would refuse to attend any festivities in which the nautch was part of the programme, great courage and strength would be given to the cause of moral reform. We know of two friends in a lonely station who were invited to a dinner given by some Indian gentlemen to the officers of the district on tour. At the close of the dinner, as they returned to their seats in the tent, they found two nautch-girls seated on the carpet while the players were thrumming and tuning their instruments. Immediately our friends arose to depart, and when

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pressed to stay, they clearly stated their reason for going. An English government official sitting near, whispered to the husband, "You are doing quite right in going. If my wife were here, I would do the same." These friends would not have gone to the dinner, had they known the nautch was on the programme. If a few high officials were to make inquiries before accepting invitations, and refuse to go unless the programme omitted the nautch, it would not only be a check to that kind of entertainment, but would relegate it to the place where it morally belongs—outside of decent society.

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IX

AN ANTI-NAUTCH MOVEMENT

In 1892 there was organized, in Madras, an Anti-Nautch Movement by educated Hindus. The *Indian Social Reformer* supported the movement in its columns. The Lahore *Purity Servant* also advocated the cause; and, occasionally, articles appeared in other papers. The movement has done a great deal of good in educating public opinion, and in enlisting men to refuse to attend nautch parties, or to have them at the festivities in their own homes. Also, later, Anti-Nautch and Purity Associations have been organized in different parts of the country, a recognition of which is always found now in the resolutions passed at the annual Social Conference. The action taken in 1899 was as follows:

"In the opinion of the Conference, the Reports of all the Associations show that a healthy change is taking place, in all parts of the country, in favor of the Anti-Nautch and Purity Movements, including in the last, the condemnation of the practice of devoting girls, nominally to temple service, but practically to a life of prostitution; and it entertains no doubt that public sentiment favors both these movements, as tending to purify our personal, family, and public life; and the Conference

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trusts that these efforts will be continued, and that a vigilant watch will be kept by the organs of Public Opinion upon all attempts to violate this healthy sentiment."

To this there has been added, for the first time, the clause expressing disapproval of the dedication of girls to temple service, and defines it to be practically a life of immorality. In spite of the optimistic tone of the resolution, we consider that the Anti-Nautch Movement is less aggressive now than formerly.

In its beginning, in the latter part of 1893, an appeal was made to the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and to the Governor of Madras, in the shape of a memorial which bore a large number of signatures of the educated class, with the hope of gaining their practical help and influence in so great a moral question. As the memorial also defines the position of the Anti-Nautch Movement, we give it in full:

"*The humble memorial of the undersigned members of the 'Hindu Social Reform Association' of Madras, and others,*

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

1. That there exists in the Indian community a class of women commonly known as nautch-girls.

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2. That these women are invariably prostitutes.

3. That countenance and encouragement are given to them, and even a recognized status in society secured to them, by the practice which prevails among Hindus, to a very undesirable extent, of inviting them to take part in marriage and other festivities, and even to entertainments given in honor of guests who are not Hindus.

4. That this practice not only necessarily lowers the moral tone of society, but also tends to destroy that family life on which national soundness depends, and to bring upon individuals ruin in property and character alike.

5. That this practice rests only upon fashion, and receives no authority from antiquity or religion, and accordingly has no claim to be considered a National Institution, and is entitled to no respect as such.

6. That a strong feeling is springing up among the educated classes of this country against the prevalence of this practice, as is evinced, among other things, by the proceedings at a public meeting in Madras, on the 5th of May, 1893.

7. That so keenly do your Memorialists realize the harmful and degrading character of this practice, that they have resolved neither to invite

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nautch-girls to any entertainments given by themselves, nor to accept any invitation to an entertainment at which it is known that nautch-girls are to be present.

8. That your Memorialists feel assured that Your Excellency desires to aid, by every proper means, those who labor to remove any form of social evil.

9. That your Memorialists accordingly appeal to Your Excellency, as the official and recognized head of society in the Presidency of Madras, and as the representative of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen-Empress, in whose influence and example the cause of purity has ever found support, to discourage this pernicious practice by declining to attend any entertainment at which nautch-girls are invited to perform, and thus to strengthen the hands of those who are trying to purify the social life of their community."

To this memorial came the following replies:

"VICEREGAL LODGE,

Simla, Sept. 23d, 1893.

Sir,—I am desired by His Excellency, the Viceroy, to acknowledge the receipt of a memorial signed by yourself and numerous other persons, in which you appeal to His Excellency to decline, for the future, to attend any entertain-

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ment at which nautch-girls are invited to perform. You base your request upon the statement that these women are invariably prostitutes, and that it is, therefore, undesirable to countenance, or encourage them, in any way.

The Viceroy desires me to say in reply that, although he recognizes the excellence of the objects upon which you have addressed him, he does not think that he could usefully make any such announcement as that which you have suggested. He has, on one or two occasions, when travelling in different parts of India, been present at entertainments of which a nautch formed a part, but the proceedings were, as far as His Excellency observed them, not characterized by any impropriety, and the performers were present in the exercise of their profession as dancers, in accordance with the custom of the country.

Under the circumstances, His Excellency does not, on the eve of his departure from India, feel called upon to take any action such as that which you have recommended."

"GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
Madras, 4th October.

Sir,—In reply to the memorial recently received from the 'Hindu Social Reform Association,' I am desired to inform you that although His Ex-

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cellency fully appreciates the good intentions which have actuated those who have joined with you in issuing the memorial, yet, he doubts if any advantage would be gained by his accepting the obligation which the memorial wishes to impose upon him. H. E. has been present on several occasions on which nautches have been performed, at none of which has he ever seen anything which might, in the remotest degree, be considered improper; and it has never occurred to him to take into consideration the moral character of the performers at these entertainments, any more than when he has been present at performances which have been carried out by professional dancers or athletes either in Europe or India. H. E., the Governor, therefore, regrets his inability to conform to the wishes expressed in the memorial."

On these replies the *Indian Social Reformer* (October 14th, 1893), makes the following excellent comment: "Both state that at the entertainments given to them they have witnessed nautches, but so far as their Excellencies could observe there was nothing improper in the performance. Both lay stress on the nautch-girls being professional dancers, and it has never occurred to them to look too closely into the moral

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character of these women. . . . Now it was never suggested by the Memorialists that in the performance of the nautch there is any open impropriety visible to the casual eye. Even if it was there, it is hardly to be expected that it should be displayed before their Excellencies. . . . Their Excellencies should not forget that they represent in this country a sovereign whose respect for purity and piety is as great as she is great. The people of India cannot but look with wonder on the representatives of Her Majesty being present at the performances of women who, as everybody knows, are prostitutes; and their Excellencies, hereafter, at least, must know to be such. 'Do they get prostitute dancers to perform at entertainments given specially in honor of the royalty in Europe? The nautch-woman is *invited* to perform, it must be remembered: which is a very different thing from people going to theatres or other places where people of bad character *may be* engaged to entertain the public. The nautch-woman, thus, gets a status in the company."

Most Englishmen look upon it as a Hindu custom that has existed from time immemorial, without a thought of its moral bearing on Hindu society. The fact is that English and native so-

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ciety are so widely separated, their customs, moral standards, and the position of women so different, that the average European fails to understand the struggle that has begun to right matters in India, since its contact with Western education and the Bible standard of morals. Many of them would watch a nautch performance, as they would a snake charmer's feats, a travelling juggler's tricks, as something novel and curious, or perhaps tiresome, and to be endured with the best grace possible. Out of sight it would be out of mind. But should an English host bring for their entertainment into the drawing-room a similar class of Englishwomen, they would leave the house scandalized and insulted. They would regard it as a recognition of immorality and vice that could never be endured. Is not what is immoral in England, immoral in India as well; and can any custom of the people make it otherwise? We are convinced that if the highest officials in India were to refuse to attend nautches on moral grounds, their action would be an object lesson in moral education to the whole country. Hindu hosts would soon be ashamed and drop the nautch from the programmes of their public entertainments. The fact that no protest is made, only

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encourages the idea that there is nothing wrong or disgraceful in the custom.

Again the nautch-girl is continually said by many to be only the counterpart of the European ballet-dancer. The ballet-dancer is not necessarily immoral, though it is true that by her profession she is thrown into great temptation before which character often breaks down. But the dancing-girl is a recognized immoral character, and launched into her career as such. Even if it were true that the ballet-dancer is invariably immoral, she has no religious or social standing; she never conducts any part of religious service; or graces any wedding or other festivity.

Again, in her public capacity, the ballet-dancer can choose her profession, or if she wishes can leave it and enter into any other walk in life for which she is fitted; and lead a useful career. But the nautch-girl is born into her profession, and must follow it just as a carpenter, goldsmith, or farmer is born into his caste and follows the trade of his father. If she is adopted into it, it is usually done while she is a mere child, and unconscious of what the life in its moral bearings is. The nautch-girl is a recognized caste. This is the iniquity of it. We would not be hard on the nautch-girl herself, al-

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though she is a pest and bane to Hindu society, for she has been made such; and "on Hindu society must rest the awful responsibility of these abandoned lives."

If a nautch-woman's children were boys, they used to be brought up as drummers and fiddlers; but now a change is coming over this class, and they are educating their boys and getting them into higher walks of life. But the girls must invariably follow in their mother's footsteps. With the dancing-girls, a daughter takes the precedence of a son, and an adopted daughter takes the same place, and has the same rights as an adopted son in other castes.

The custom of adopting a daughter in this caste has always prevailed in India, and has been recognized and sustained by Hindu law. The reason usually given for adoption is, that the nautch-girl being childless, wishes to have some one to inherit her property. We do not question the statement; but we know that many of these women do adopt girls when they already have natural children, and this claim cannot be made for them. In addition to this desire for an heir, there must be added the desire to have some one, in case of adversity in old age, to support them by their earnings; and that, too, adoption

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by such women is only a cloak to secure children for immoral purposes whose earnings will increase the family revenue; for most of them have to pass all they earn over to the "mother," or mistress as she might in some cases more properly be called.

We cannot agree with the Memorialists when they say, "that this practice rests only upon fashion, and receives no authority from antiquity or religion;" for some of the sacred books give accounts of this class as existing then, and it is this very ancient usage with religious sanction, that makes evil so hard to deal with now. Let the Memorialists keep knocking at the doors of Viceregal Lodge, and at the minds and consciences of the people, till government knows that the better classes desire the law to be put in execution, and that there is a change in popular opinion to warrant the demand.

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X

INFANTICIDE

"MURDER is the first specific crime brought to our notice after the fall of man, and in its form of infanticide, it has been more or less practiced and approved from motives of corrupted religion, and mistaken social economy, by almost all the tribes and nations of the world.

"When the grand objects of sacrifice, the earliest prescribed rule of religion, the acknowledgment by the worshipper of a guilt deserving suffering and death, and the foreshadowing of the offering of the promised substitute and Saviour, were forgotten or obscurely remembered, the maxim that the "fruit of the body should be given for the sin of the soul," obtained a wide currency in the human family. Speedily the character of the Divinity was mistaken for that of a demon; and in the conception formed by man of God, a malevolent thirsting for blood was substituted for a love of holiness seeking to impress on the intelligent creation the dread of sin by pointing to the great redemption needed for its absolution. Children of tender age be-

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came the most manageable, as well as the most precious of victims. They were not only destroyed to deprecate and avert apprehended evil, but were offered up as the price and purchase of desired good.

"The Phœnicians and Canaanites made their children pass through the fire to Moloch. The Jews who entered the land of Canaan were frequently tempted to become imitators of this horrid iniquity. Manasseh actually sacrificed his son to Moloch (2 Kings xxi. 6). Even after the good King Josiah had defiled Tophet in order to put a stop to the infantile sacrifices there practiced (2 Kings xviii. 10), the crime was revived and called forth the solemn denunciations of the prophet. God solemnly warns the Jews not to give their seed to this false god on the penalty of death (Lev. xx. 1–5; Deut. xviii. 10–12). The Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Persians, in some form or other, practiced this sin. Among the Israelites alone sacrificial infanticide seems to have been absolutely forbidden.

"Infanticide, in one form or another, has prevailed not among barbarous nations alone, but, generally speaking, all over the heathen world; and so far was it from being prevented by the

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boasted wisdom, civilization and refinement of Greece and Rome, that these very qualities were employed in cherishing, regulating and perpetuating the crime. The conclusion which seems to be warranted by these facts, is that we have little security against infanticide, or any other crime against nature, where Christianity is unknown. It is only before the direct or indirect influence of the Bible that infanticide has given way. It was Christianity, and not philosophy, that first lifted up its voice against the crime of infanticide as practiced by the Romans, through Constantine."[1]

With this review of the subject, by Dr. Wilson, it will be seen that this crime is not a special crime of the Hindus. When considered from certain points of view, India is a country where you would least expect to find this great wrong. It is irreconcilable with their tenets about the sacredness of life and the doctrines of the transmigration of the soul. In a country where the life of a beast is supposed to be held sacred; where a high-caste Hindu used to shudder at the thought of an egg being broken in his presence; and who used to go out of his way

[1] *Suppression of Infanticide in Western India*, by Dr. Jno. Wilson.

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rather than pass a butcher's stall in the bazaar; how did so inhuman and wicked a custom gain a footing?

Some have tried to trace the origin of infanticide to the Mohammedan invasion—that scapegoat for more than one Indian evil. But it can be clearly proved that it existed centuries before that time. The custom is not found among the Mohammedans. A recent writer has said: "A Mohammedan treats whatever is given him by Providence, son or daughter, with equal feelings of affection and regard; and, however poor, he will never think of depriving them of life, but would rather beg alms to support them."

Infanticide has existed under two forms in India:

1. The dedication of children to the Ganges to be devoured by crocodiles and sharks. Soon after William Carey came to India, in 1794, he discovered this crime, and the discovery weighed upon the heart of himself and fellow-workers so constantly, that in addition to continual protests to the people, steps were taken to call the attention of the English authorities to the matter. Says Smith: "Since 1794, when Thomas and he found, in a basket hanging on a tree, the bones of an infant that had been exposed to be devoured

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by the white ants, by some mother too poor to go on a pilgrimage to a sacred river-spot, Carey had known this unnatural horror."

There was a great annual festival at Ganga Sagar (near his home). The supposed virtues of this place were thought to arise from its geographical situation. Ganga is the word for Ganges, and Sagar for sea; and as at this particular place the river flowed into the sea, the confluence was held to be a place of special sanctity. Here mothers not only threw their children into the sea, but widows and even men walked into the sea and drowned themselves, esteeming it a special act of holiness, and securing immediate heaven.

Carey represented the matter to government and, continues Smith, "the result of Carey's memorial was the publication of the Regulation for preventing the sacrifice of children at Sagar and other places on the Ganges, saying: "It has been represented to the Governor-General in Council, that a criminal and inhuman practice of sacrificing children by exposing them to be drowned or devoured by sharks, prevails. . . . Children thrown into the sea at Sagar have not been generally rescued . . . but the sacrifice has been effected with circumstances of pe-

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culiar atrocity in some instances. This practice is not sanctioned by the Hindu law, nor countenanced by the religious orders." It was accordingly declared to be murder and punishable by death. This was in the rule of Lord Wellesley. Sepoys were stationed at each gathering to see the law observed. Strange to say the people quietly assented, the practice soon fell into disuse, and this special form of infanticide has so completely disappeared from sight that it is often denied that it ever existed.

One of the Swamis who visited America protested that he had never heard of such a thing. It is no doubt thought by some to be an instance of missionary exaggeration. The French lady Swami, Abhayananda, recently said in this country that "in India children are thrown into the Ganges and under the wheel of the car of Jagannath; and that she has been constantly asked how such things are possible in the land of the beautiful Vedanta philosophy." It is perhaps true that uninformed people at home think that because it once was a custom, that it still exists. But missionaries do not circulate the "calumny"; and whenever they do refer to it, it is to give thanks that the gospel's influence has caused so inhuman a custom to cease.

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2. Rajput infanticide as it has, and does to some extent still exist in India. The custom of throwing children into the Ganges had in it the sacrificial idea, the appeasing of Deity; and was, in this respect, like the infanticide of the Canaanites and other peoples from a mistaken idea of God, and the belief that they were doing Him a pleasure and service; and also to purchase blessings or avert evil from themselves and families. But Rajput infanticide is selfishness pure and simple. It is a preference for murder, rather than to run the risk of having to make inferior alliances for their daughters; or the disgrace of their remaining single should they not be able to find suitable husbands for them; or to escape providing the large dowry which foolish and extravagant customs have fixed and demanded. "And," says a writer, "the practice of infanticide was often based on the recommendation of the *Suttee;* for surely, reasoned the Rajputs, we may destroy a daughter by starvation, suffocation, poison or neglect, of whose marriage in the line of caste and dignity of family there is little prospect, if a widow may be burned to save her chastity."

This crime has been the besetting sin of the Rajputs, though some other tribes have copied it;

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and, as Dr. Wilson says: "Had it not been for the merciful intervention of the British Government, there is no saying to what extent it might have spread through all the provinces of India."

The word Rajput literally means the sons of Rajas and princes. They trace their genealogy to the ancient Solar and Lunar dynasties which ruled in India. "A poor Rajput holds himself as good a gentleman as the most powerful landholder. Each one is a free citizen, and all are peers." There is a certain dignity and pride of manner about a Rajput; no matter what his condition in life may be. But, with all their martial spirit, their notions of honor, and the great respect they give their women, who are said to be often of singular beauty, infanticide and the *Suttee* rose to the highest pitch among them. Major Murdo writing in 1818 mentions that among the offspring of 8,000 Rajputs probably not more than thirty females were alive.

For this barbarity there is no religious sanction to plead, as in the case of the *Suttee;* nor are the Rajputs inferior to the other races in India in feelings of humanity; but it is the laws that regulate marriage among them that have so powerfully promoted infanticide. No clan can marry except within its own line; and the fear of

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dishonor by having to marry a daughter into an inferior clan, or that she should remain unmarried, induces her parents to take her life rather than run the risk. Besides, the foolish extravagant marriage customs are feared and dreaded, and help to settle the fate of the newborn baby girl. Her death is affected by strangling her immediately; by an opium pill forced into the mouth and left to do its silent work; by covering the mother's breast with a poison which is taken in by the child in its first draught of milk; or by neglect and starvation.

The Jarejas of Guzerat—a clan of Rajputs—give as the origin of infanticide the following story: "A powerful Raja of their caste had a daughter of singular beauty and accomplishments. He sent his family priest to search for a prince of equal rank and wealth as a husband for her. Failing to find such an one, and seeing the Raja's sorrow, he advised him to avoid the disgrace of having her remain unmarried by putting her to death. This the Raja could not bring himself to do; but the priest volunteered to assume all the consequences of the sin, and he put her to death."

The custom first came to the knowledge of the British Government in 1789. Jonathan Duncan,

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of the Bengal Civil Service, and afterward Governor of Bombay, while residing at Benares, discovered the practice of infanticide among the *Raj kumars*, originally denominated *Rajputs*, who were the most influential inhabitants of his district and supposed to be about forty thousand in number. In a few months he succeeded in putting down the practice, and on being made Governor of Bombay he discovered the same practice among the Rajputs of Kathiawar and Kutch. Here, likewise, he spared no effort for its abolition. The Cathedral of St. Thomas, in Bombay, the first Protestant church built in India, is a very fitting place for a monument covering the grave of Jonathan Duncan. It is surmounted by two children holding a scroll on which is inscribed, "Infanticide abolished in Benares and Kathiawar." But this suppression was only temporary, especially at Benares, where it broke out with fresh power. This destruction of females may be better realized if we state the fact that among the Jarejas of Kutch there was, in 1846, only one female to eight males.

Ever since the days of Duncan the English Government has dealt firmly with this evil. It has met with tremendous and persistent difficulties. Ten years after government began its

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efforts in Guzerat, only sixty-three girls were known to have been saved. The names of some English officials, that might have otherwise been soon forgotten, will always be remembered for their noble and persistent efforts to suppress this crime. From some districts the custom has disappeared; in others the proportion of girls and boys is more nearly equal; while in a few the custom is apparently as rife as ever. "The only difference lies in this," says a recent writer, "that, while before the British rule, or before the introduction of the Indian Penal Code, the offence was perpetrated either openly, or without recourse to much skill and ingenuity to conceal it; it is now, through fear of the law and punishment, committed with the utmost secrecy, and with such cleverness as to avoid all possible chance of detection."

It would require a separate volume to give an adequate idea of the efforts and expedients government has adopted to suppress the crime, and of the obstacles that have frustrated their efforts; of their entreaties with the chiefs of the clans and the rulers of the native states to abolish the crime among them, and through them to create a public opinion against it; of the attempts to get the leaders of the people to fix the maximum of mar-

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riage expenses, (which is one of the greatest incentives to the crime), or to excommunicate those who practice it. Much has been accomplished, but it has taken hundreds of years to bring it about; and much yet remains to be done.

In 1890, an Infanticide Act (Act VIII.) was passed that required for its workings special police surveillance of the suspected villages; that is, villages where the census returns showed a vast disproportion between boys and girls of the same age. For instance, in one tribe, eighty boys under twelve years of age were found and only eight girls; and in one district one hundred boys to eighty-seven girls. One great cause of failure in bringing the offence home to the perpetrators is the combination or union of all the villagers to conceal the crime. It baffles detection because of their sympathy with the perpetrators of the crime who, most presumably, are fully known to them.

The writer quoted above tells the story of a native Deputy Inspector of Police who was asked if he had any children, and replied: "Yes, I had the misfortune to have two daughters, but I have dispatched both of them. May God now bless me with a son!" In one district, a few years ago, several hundred children were returned as

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having been carried off by the wolves—*all of whom were girls!* We know of a Rajput woman who told a friend of ours that eight girls had been put out of the way in her family.

We trust that not many years will elapse before infanticide, like the *Suttee*, will be a thing of the past.

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XI

A CHAPTER OF INDIAN TESTIMONY

EUROPEANS, and especially missionaries, are often accused of making erroneous and exaggerated statements about India and India's people, particularly about the condition of women. We do not resent the charge. Perhaps some do, for as the *Indian Witness* says, "Missionaries may sometimes err in describing particular cases as typical of the whole, and, being human, may even exaggerate. But it is hardly possible to portray the sad condition of Indian women, generally, in too sombre colors. Indians themselves are our most reliable authority as to the woes they suffer, and the disadvantages under which they labor." For this reason we have taken special pains, with few exceptions, to quote Indian authorities in these pages.

We believe some of our Indian friends deny statements out of ignorance of facts. They have been happily circumstanced themselves, and have not come into close personal contact with much of the suffering of which we write, and hence are unwilling to believe it exists. Ramabai has

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told us that up to the time she was sixteen or seventeen years of age, although she had visited almost every sacred shrine in India, in company with her parents, and afterward with her brother, she was so shielded that she knew nothing of the evils that existed in these places till long afterward.

Miss Thoburn says: "The late Mrs. Anandibai Joshi, who studied medicine in America, was unwilling to admit that child marriage was an evil. Her own marriage at nine had been to a relative, her teacher and best friend; and with this experience, and the traditions of her people, she had been unconscious of the suffering of others. She would have changed her mind, had she lived to practice her profession in India."

Then people may live so exclusive a life in their own caste, as to be ignorant of the customs and practices of other castes. We believe that this to some degree, accounts for the different statements made to travellers. The traveller argues thus: "Now here is a sensible Hindu. If he does not know about his own people, who should know?" In our investigations about the *muralis*, we asked questions of many Hindu friends, only to find some knew nothing about it, and though others knew there was such a

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custom, yet they had never paid attention to it and could give no information.

On the other hand, there is sometimes an unwillingness on the part of some to admit the real facts. Mr. Malabari in speaking about India reforming herself says: "And what is the present phase of Indian patriotism in this connection? Whenever a defect is pointed out, the first impulse of our average patriot is to justify and conceal. How can he be a witness to a cause, when he is anxious to hide the truth of it from the world's gaze? The only way to reach perfection is by getting rid of imperfections at any cost."

In view of what is often said against European writers and speakers, it has seemed best to have a chapter of Indian testimony concerning these wrongs, and thus set forth the opinions our friends themselves hold concerning the evils in question.

Take first the matter of *custom:* Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, C. I. E., Vice Chancellor of the Bombay University, in an address delivered in 1894, said "Custom is a god whom our race devoutly worships, and religious sanction was accorded to these practices by the insertion of later texts in the later books. . . . The question now is, whether with our minds liberalized by

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English education and contact with European civilization, we shall continue to worship custom and be its slaves, and allow our moral sentiments to remain dead, and our unjust and cruel practices to flourish. If an education does not lead us to protest against them, that education must be considered to be merely superficial. . . . Custom has been and is an authority; custom is our religion."

The *Indian Social Reformer* declared, about the same time, that "It is futile to suppose that India can herself heal her ills, if only more light is given her. The history of Social Reform for the last twenty-five years attests to this. Reformers have published the injunctions of the *shastras* on the subject of the disfigurement of the widow. They have shown that the custom has not the sanction of the *shastras*. But all the same, the Hindu community is heedless of their words. Is it not foolish to expect that a community like ours can be reasoned into wisdom and common sense? The community has lost the motive power to initiate, or welcome any wholesome reform."

Mr. B. N. Das, an Indian lawyer of high repute, writing to the *Lucknow Advocate* says: "We are living in a stormy epoch. We want a

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stormy patriotism, a patriotism independent and uncompromising, reckless of consequences, and ready to do battle with every social ill. The cup of political evils is full, the burden of social iniquities has become so intolerable, and the tyranny of custom stands out so red and foul, that a militant uprising of the better spirit in men against them has become one of the essential conditions of national salvation."

The editor of the *Bengalee*, commenting on a letter of Max Muller's, says:

"Prof. Max Muller writes a letter to the *Times*, in which he eloquently pleads for the child-widows of India. Theirs indeed is a pitiable lot, and should move the hearts of all good men and true. He very properly points out, that it is a part of the existing Hindu law, that child-widows should be consigned to this life of misery; and that the law should be changed. The manners of men changed with the times, and laws should change with manners and modes of thought. This is so obvious and elementary a principle, that we wonder our countrymen do not see it, or seeing it, do not act upon it. Laws which are antiquated and behind the manners of the age must impede the march of society. Laws should not be modified, or changed too soon; but it is a fatal mistake to

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refuse to change them, when the necessity for such change has become apparent. We have been committing this mistake for centuries together. We have allowed ourselves to be guided by ironclad rules, some of which are wholly unsuited to the circumstances of the times, and to our present environments, and we have become slaves of customs which have tyrannized over us with a rigor surpassing the rigor of the most despotic Governments in the world. The worst form of slavery is that in which the slave hugs his chains and does not realize his true condition. We are afraid we have become the bondsmen of our own creation, victims in many cases of institutions, which the great legislators of the past, the illustrious founders of the Hindu system, would, if they were now living, declare to be wholly unsuited to the circumstances of the present day. The institution of enforced widowhood, and the prohibition to sea voyage are cases in point."

At a meeting of the Madras Social Reform Association in 1894, one of the speakers, Mr. B. Varada Charlu, said, "Custom in Hindu Society is the autocrat of all autocrats, and will tolerate not the least sign of a spirit of inquiry. Surely a religion which has been allowed to so far de-

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generate as to give every prominence to mere externalities without any reference to the inner life of its votaries, must either mend or end very soon. It is poor consolation to be told that our present social customs had a religious significance in the past, and should, for that reason, if for no other, be preserved intact for future generations to unravel the forgotten mysteries and infuse fresh life into them. By all means, if one is so inclined, let him preserve old customs where they are of an inocuous or indifferent character, but certainly let him not, at this fag end of the nineteenth century, deny the right of the individual, even though he be a Hindu, to act according to the dictates of his conscience and of his reason; especially when those customs are unsuited to present circumstances and pernicious in their effects on society."

We present, also, a few testimonies on the matter of *Enforced Widowhood.*

A recent correspondent of the *Indian Social Reformer*, writes on the subject of enforced widowhood, as follows: "In the days of my early childhood," writes a friend from the mofussil, "in those days when the mind can hardly penetrate through the thick folds of mystery which shroud half the things of the world, my simple

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mind was drawn to the subject of the Hindu widow. Her melancholy attire, her disfigured head, her careworn appearance, the rude way in which she is handled by our society, all these created in me the impression that the widow somehow belonged not to the ranks of the two recognized sexes, that possibly she might be a being of a third sex, or else a member of a totally different species of the animal world! Nearly twenty-five years have elapsed since that crude notion entered my brain, and yet not all the education and experience I have gained has totally erased that belief of mine, though they have considerably modified it, as they do so many of our childish vagaries and crudities. Verily the Hindu widow belongs to a separate sex, a different order of living beings! Widowhood anywhere is tormenting enough; and in this glorious land of Arvavarth, custom adds insult to injury."

Another Indian writer testifies thus: "At the recent Akola Sessions, the judge passed a sentence of transportation for life on one, Tani, for having killed her infant child. . . . It was the usual tale of a Hindu child-widow. . . . Says the Judge: "The accused was a Brahman widow whose husband died when she was still a child.

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The crime she committed was that of a desperate woman bent on hiding her shame, and with the loss of caste staring her in the face. Such crimes, although they must be severely punished, are to some extent venial, and I shall move the Local Government to commute the sentence to one of six years' rigorous imprisonment." Many have bewailed the fate of the Hindu widow and have noted case after case in which the unfortunate creatures are, for mere shame, compelled to commit serious crimes. The Hindu widow has by mere perversity, blindfoldedness of those most concerned, been long a suffering, though unwilling victim at the sacrifice of inexorable and inhuman customs. Now and then comes to light a serious case like the present; but how many more may be occurring which are never brought to public notice! These occasional cases, however, hardly excite public opinion, and the stolid, indifferent communities again relapse into their usual drowsiness. Educated India, at any rate, was expected to come to the rescue, and give a new direction to the trend of public opinion; but the hope has never been realized. The educated man of the present day is a person entirely without a backbone, not only in this, but in all other departments of public activities. Persons speaking

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from Congress platforms, and loudly demanding rights and privileges from government, might certainly direct their attention with greater effect to matters social. To rectify social evils one's own moral courage is a necessary ingredient and no extraneous help is necessary as in political matters; but politics means very little sacrifice to very many, while social problems involve real self-sacrifice and personal suffering by loss of caste and excommunication."

Mr. K. Subba Rao, in a lecture on the remarriage of child-widows, made this statement:

"The widow's presence is, on certain occasions, regarded as inauspicious. There are even yet, in the year of grace, 1895, educated and uneducated men by hundreds and thousands who, while starting from their homes bent upon achieving some cherished end, pass a few steps and suddenly retrace their steps, as if stung by some venomous reptile, *because they see a widow coming in front of them.* Some of them even contend that, in their everyday experience, the ominous presentment which the presence of the widow suggested to them, was verified by subsequent occurrences in the course of the day. While it is not within my province to offer explanations for all the chapter of inexplicable ac-

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cidents, what I wish to impress upon your minds is the existence of this deep-seated prejudice, the widely prevalent belief that the presence of a widow forebodes evil or failure. This belief is transmitted from generation to generation, and I am not sure that even the most polished and cultured among us have been always free from it. This is a living evidence of the centuries that have elapsed since the degradation of women began in this country. Sometimes the most affectionate of sons and brothers have had the sorrowful duty of imploring their widowed mothers and sisters to be careful of their movements on festive occasions like marriage, when bad and good omens play an important part."

The *Poonah Sudharak*, speaking of the famine says: "Nature would be herself again, and the unfortunate people who have suffered severe losses would soon be reconciled to their lot. There would still be a very considerable number of miserable beings who will not forget their misfortunes because the society to which they belong will not allow them to do so. *The helpless Hindu child-widow, whose lot is dark misery, pure and simple, unmixed with the slightest ray of hope or escape, will continue to mope and shed tears of bitter sorrow.* The number of these

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poor victims to the bigotry of their community is always large, but this year it will be three or four times as large at the smallest. Let the Hindu community move, if it can move at all, and do something for the amelioration of their own sisters and daughters. Let them show at least that they are alive to the fact that the poor sufferers are their own flesh and blood. . . . We wrote a series of articles in our Vernacular columns, on the desirability of approaching government with a view to amend the existing penal law, so as to make the disfigurement of Hindu widows under the age of twenty-one punishable."

We turn now to the nautch-girl, and on this point a couple of testimonies must suffice. Dr. Bhandarkar said, a few years ago, in a public address: "I have always been of the opinion that he who patronizes dancing-girls does not sufficiently hate the immoral life which they professedly lead, or value as highly as he ought to do, female purity, which is the soil on which the noble qualities of women grow. The institution of *Nautch* cannot but have a debasing effect on the morality of men and women. I shall not, without strong proof believe in a man's being a faithful husband if he takes delight in giving

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Nautch parties and attending them. To have a nautch at one's own house is to give an object lesson in immorality to the boys and girls in the family; and especially to the former. As long as the *Nautch* is fashionable among us, and is freely indulged in, it is impossible that the morality of our men should greatly improve, or that our respect for women should increase; and in a country in which women are trampled upon, there can be no great advantage in social and moral matters."

The *Indian Social Reformer* of June 9th, 1894, asks very pertinently: "What has a prostitute to do in a marriage ceremony? How does her presence add grace or sanctity to such occasion? A virgin-widow, pure as snow and innocent as the dove, is an unwelcome guest to a marriage *pandal.* But a shameless prostitute who has sold her all, must tie the *mangala sutra* round the neck of the bride. What monstrous inconsistency! What degraded notions of immorality! Has Annie Besant or Vivekananda naught to say to this? We say that the dancing-girl and the child-widow are the two great blots on our social system and our Hinduism."

On the question of *Child Marriage* Mr. Munmohan Ghose says: "I look upon the system of

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child marriage as the greatest curse of our country." And Mr. S. N. Tagore adds: "It is a canker that eats into the vitals of our national existence, and which, if not removed in time, may lead to the degeneracy and decay of the whole race."

Sir T. Madhaw Rao says: "And I also am of the opinion that such limit should be fixed. Even if it is fixed at ten, it will do considerable good. It may be fixed at fourteen or fifteen for non-Brahmans."

Mr. B. M. Malabari writes as follows: "A Madras native paper reports a marriage in which the bride is as old as from seven to eight years, and the bridegroom only sixty years old! Well may the reporter ask if such a marriage is not worse than slavery for the child-wife. A Madras friend told me last year of a marriage in which the bride was eighteen months, and the bridegroom about twenty-two years. Are such marriages heard or dreamed of in any other part of the world? So much for our progress."

Surely these brief but clear and pointed testimonies from members of the Hindu race, will show that we have not in any way overstated the matters with which we are dealing, but have rather understated the facts than otherwise.

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XII

THE POSITION OF GOVERNMENT

A NATIVE once said "that the British rule was good in every way, *only that we cannot treat our wives as we used to.*" We wish to consider just how far this is true, and just what the government has done for the amelioration of the condition of women.

The old East India Company was incorporated by Queen Elizabeth, December 31st, 1600, just as the sixteenth century passed away. Up to 1773, the government of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay had been that of Independent Presidencies. In 1773 the Regulating Act was adopted, the three presidencies were united under one government, and a Governor-General was appointed for all India, with a Supreme Council and a Court of Judicature. Warren Hastings was the first Governor-General.

In 1781 another Act of Parliament was passed which authorized the Governor-General and the Council of Bengal to make regulations which should have the force of law. The policy of the East India Company was to leave the people un-

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disturbed in the exercise of their religious, domestic and social customs. Hindus were judged by Hindu law framed from their sacred books, and Mohammedans by Mohammedan law derived from the Koran. But in all other matters, such as contracts, civil wrongs, crimes or "wherever any question arose which affected the followers of all religions alike, it was necessary to have a common code to which there could be an equal appeal from all parties." In 1781 government began to give attention to this, and in 1834 Lord Macaulay was sent out to India, in the days of Lord Bentinck, as a legal member of the Governor-General's Council, to prepare a penal code for the use of the government of India.

During the rule of Lord Canning, came the Indian mutiny in 1857. This was the deathblow of the old East India Company and the birth of the new empire. The story of the mutiny roused the whole British nation, and in July, 1858, the government of India was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown. In November, 1858, a proclamation in all the different Indian languages was issued, declaring that Her Majesty had assumed the direct government of her Eastern Empire. The Governor-General ceased to rule in the name of the East India Company, and became

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the Viceroy of India. This proclamation was read publicly in every station, civil and military, with every accompaniment of ceremonial splendor, and was received by all classes throughout India with the greatest enthusiasm. Among other things promised, were the following:

"We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all other subjects; and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfill.

"Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favored, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us, that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure.

. . . . . .

"When, by the blessing of Providence, internal tranquillity shall be restored, it is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer its government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward. And may the God of all power grant unto us strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people."

This proclamation has been called the Magna Charta of the Indian people. Nineteen years

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later, January 1st, 1877, Queen Victoria, with great pomp, and certainly it can be said in these modern days, with unparalleled splendor, was proclaimed Empress of India. The brilliant Imperial Assemblage at Delhi was repeated with greater or less ceremony in every civil and military station in India. Sixteen thousand prisoners were set free, and public works were inaugurated by the benevolent in memory of the day. And this celebration was understood to be a renewal of the proclamation and promise of non-interference with the religious and social customs of the people that was made in 1858, when the Crown for the first time took over India from the East India Company.

"Since 1860, the Legislative Council of India has from time to time enacted many wise laws, as necessity has seemed to call for them; and recently, it has been said by Sir Henry Maine, that 'British India is in possession of a set of codes which approach the highest standard of excellence which this species of legislation has reached. In form, intelligibility, and comprehensiveness, the Indian code stands against all competition.'"[1]

The proclamation of 1858 was but the reiteration of the pledges made to the people by the

[1] *India and Malaysia*, by Bishop Thoburn.

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East India Company, whose "firmest article of faith was that all the customs of the natives should be scrupulously respected, and that nothing should be done to give umbrage to their religious prejudices." This policy has been consistently adhered to throughout the rule of the English in India. The only departures made from it, says a writer, "have been taken under some paramount sense that an outrage not sanctioned by God, and disapproved of by the higher conscience of the Indians themselves, was being perpetrated, shocking to the human mind and amounting to a scandal on our legislation. . . .

But respect and protection for the special religion of the Hindus cannot and must not allow us to be blind to acts which are in contravention of all religion, and opposed to the most clearly established rights of humanity. No religion can justify the sacrifice of innocent persons. A civilized government is bound to protect them or lose its reputation.

It is this pledge to the people, reiterated in the proclamation of 1858, and freshly emphasized in the proceedings of January, 1877, that, as is popularly believed, ties the hands of government when justice and humanity clamor for action on the behalf of women. And it is also the cry of

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the orthodox and opposing elements amongst the Hindus against legislative interference.

Says Sir W. W. Hunter: "When the English assumed the government of India, they gave emphatic pledges that they would leave the religious and domestic customs of the people undisturbed. By degrees they found out that there were three very terrible customs affecting Hindu women. First, that as all women ought, according to the religious law of the Hindus, to be married; and as an unmarried daughter is considered a disgrace to a family, *child marriage was universal among the higher castes* in order to avoid the possible disgrace and to secure the fulfillment of the law. Second, that as in certain castes it was difficult to find husbands of equal rank for all the daughters, and to defray the extravagant cost of the wedding ceremonies, *female infanticide was common.* Third, that amongst the highest castes the *cruel rite of burning widows on their husband's funeral pile prevailed;* and that a widow who did not burn herself thus was condemned to lifelong celibacy and penance.

As the English rulers realized the inhumanity of the domestic system which they had undertaken to perpetuate, the more conscientious of

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them were pricked to the heart. On the one hand, their pledges not to interfere had been solemn and explicit. On the other hand, they found themselves compelled to be the daily accomplices of acts of abominable cruelty, and to recognize by law the organized murder of the two most helpless classes of their subjects. The widow and the infant, whose defenseless condition made them in a special manner the wards of the State, were precisely the persons to whom the State refused protection.

For three-quarters of a century after Bengal had legally passed under English administration, the new rulers felt their hands tied by the pledges which they had given. But during that period a maxim of interpretation in regard to those pledges had been acquiring precision and force. It was at length admitted that the British government could maintain the customary and religious law, *only so far as that law did not conflict with its higher duty to protect the lives of its subjects.*"

Has it been an accident that the sovereign who is at the head of this great empire should be a woman; and that that woman should be one of the noblest and best women that the century has produced; as if Providence had decreed that the

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people of India should have a living, standing protest against their treatment of women in the person of their sovereign? In India, according to the census of 1891, there is a population of over 287,000,000 under her rule; of which over 140,000,000 are women; more than twice as many women as are in all Great Britain and America taken together. This large number is composed of Christians, Mohammedans, Jains, Parsees, Hindus, Buddhists and Aborigines; but the larger proportion of them are Hindus.

Among these women we find, by the same census, nearly 23,000,000 widows. Eliminating widows of other religions, aged widows, widows with families, and widows of all but the two higher castes, Sir W. W. Hunter said, in 1886, "Broadly speaking, I believe that there are about 1,000,000 young widows of the Brahman and Rajput castes, to whom the system of forced celibacy must be held to be a cruel infringement of their natural rights." He further says that, "adding these to the young women of other high castes, there are not less than 2,000,000 widows in India to whom the existing Hindu law is an injustice and a wrong." This Hindu law the government recognizes, and accepts. To make this mass of 2,000,000 injured women

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real to our readers, we may say that it is equal to the whole population of the women of Scotland.

"This evil has its root in child marriage. All Hindu girls are either wives or widows before they reach the age of fifteen;" and, may we add, a large proportion of them are mothers when they should be playing with dolls, or should be in school. In one of the Bombay hospitals a young girl of twelve years of age was brought into the maternity ward. She gave birth to a little child, but in its birth her sufferings were so extreme that the doctor and nurse in attendance quailed at the sight of it. The doctor said with much emotion and great indignation: "Government should put a stop to such a thing."

Again, in every other country women are found in excess of men; but in India, according to the census in 1891, there are nearly six and one-quarter million less women than men. In our estimation this large number cannot be wholly accounted for by the practice of female infanticide; or from an unwillingness to make returns of the women of the family to the census taker; but by other wrongs against womanhood that tend to shorten life as well.

It is often said that the Acts bearing upon these

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matters are practically inoperative and a dead letter, and in advance of public opinion. It is true that in some respects they are; but on the other hand they are not, and the result of them has been on the whole good; both as educative, and in strengthening the cause of reform.

Government often seems to evade responsibility, by throwing it upon the people with the excuse that the measure proposed is ahead of public opinion, or that it must be "asked for by a section sufficiently important in influence or in numbers to justify the course proposed." But if any reform can be practically promoted, it can only be by government identifying itself with it. To expect any unanimity, or anything approaching it among Hindus on any social question, is an impossibility; and if government wishes to wait till such unanimity is reached, it will be impossible to promote any reform however needful. There are hundreds of men in India who would be glad of legislative interference, and who have said of late, in a sort of despair, that there is no hope of help from government. There are other educated men who oppose legislative interference; yet if government would do it without their seeming to sanction it, they would be glad, for then they could say to their people: "What

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can we do? Government has done it, and we must submit."

Government must be prepared to take the initiative in any reform measure if they are convinced of its necessity, without waiting for the people to indorse their action. Some of these wrongs are a great iniquity and a scandal to any government. The people would grumble; but when it was done they would acquiesce. Hindu fatalism, if nothing else, would help them to do it. The Indian people are convinced of the power of the government, and we feel that all it needs to promote any reform is to be simply courageous; and we do not believe there would be any resistance to any of their righteous measures. With governments, as with individuals, it is always right to do right without regard to consequences.

Kaye, in his "Administration of the East India Company," speaking of the Suttee Act, says what we believe is equally true now: "It was a great experiment and a successful one. Its success was fraught with a great lesson. The prime want of human governments is a want of faith. A bold policy is generally a successful one. It is always successful when the boldness is the result of a strong determination to do what is right

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and to leave secondary considerations to themselves. We have been continually conjuring up bugbears in the distance, only to discover, upon a nearer approach, that they are the merest conceptions of the brain. If we would only believe that a righteous policy is sure in the end to be a successful one, how much groundless alarm and unnecessary anxiety we should be spared in all our dealings with our fellows."

We summarize our thought upon these points as follows:

1. Sooner or later, government will have to face the question of fixing the marriageable age of girls. We feel that it made a great mistake in refusing the recent Madras Bill, with the excuse that it was ahead of public opinion.

2. We trust that, very soon, the enactment relating to the Restitution of Conjugal Rights will be abolished, or at least amended so as to make imprisonment impossible.

3. We trust the forfeiture-of-property clause may be modified, so that a widow, in the event of remarriage, may be able to retain her civil rights.

4. We do not plead for a divorce law for the wife, so much as that the "rights" of the husband may be modified, and that the two may be

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put in a more nearly equal position. If the wife has no redress, then the husband should not be permitted to discard her. Hindu law does not regard even flagrant immorality on the part of the husband as ground for a judicial separation between husband and wife.

5. We plead that government disallow the adoption of little girls by Nautch girls; and that the dedication of girls to gods or temples be distinctly brought under the law in such manner as to enforce punishment for every such offence.

Says Justice M. G. Ranade to his fellow-countrymen: "If we are to abjure government help under all circumstances, we must perforce fall back behind the Parsees, Mohammedans and Christians, who have freely availed themselves of such help in recasting their social arrangements. Further, as it is likely that foreign rule will last over us for an indefinite length of time, we reduce ourselves, by accepting this policy, to the extreme absurdity of shutting out a very useful help for many centuries to come. In such matters, the distinction of foreign and domestic rulers is a distinction without a difference. It has a meaning and significance when foreign interests override native interests; but when the foreigners have no interest to serve, and the ini-

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tiative is to be all our own, the recognition of State help is not open to the stock objection urged by those who think that we forfeit our independence by seeking such regulation on lines approved by us."

It has not been our desire to do any injustice to government, because we fully realize the peculiar situation in which it is placed by the pledges which have been given; but, at the same time, we dare not ignore the great opportunities and responsibilities of government to the millions of oppressed women under them; and we plead with them to rise to the full height of their opportunity and responsibility, and to be true to the trust given them when God allowed India to come under their rule. In view of this, we are impressed with the fact of how great the necessity is for the divine command that we "pray for all those in authority," that they may rule in righteousness: and what a failure it is for all Christians to neglect this command.

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XIII

WHAT GOVERNMENT HAS DONE

LET us now see what government has done for the mitigation of these wrongs:

1. While the Female Infanticide Act of 1870 does not properly come first here, yet, in its beginnings, it was one of the earliest forms of the wrongs of woman to engage the public attention.

Sacrificial infanticide, discovered by Carey and his fellow-workers in 1794, was soon completely abolished by government; but the complete abolition of Rajput infanticide is still in the future tense. Rules have been passed under the above Act which are working well in the local government of the Punjab, and our prayer is that it may not be long till the crime ceases to exist in India.

2. The enactment secured by Carey for prohibiting the sacrifice of children at Ganga Sagar and on the Ganges, was soon quoted as a precedent for further reform. Lord Wellesley took the first steps in 1805 in answer to Carey's memorial for the abolition of the Suttee, and had he

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remained in office a year longer, a prohibitory Act would have been passed in 1808. He declined to notice the "prohibitory regulations" recommended by civilian judges; but these were adopted by Lord Minto, in 1812, who issued the following instructions to his magistrates: "The government after considering the replies of the pundits, premised that the practice, generally speaking, being recognized and encouraged by the Hindu religion, it appears evident that the course which the British Government should follow, according to the principle of religious toleration already noticed, is to allow the practice in those cases in which it is countenanced by their religion, and to prevent it in others in which it is by the same authority prohibited." The magistrates were then ordered to interfere under the following conditions:

(1) To prevent undue influences on the part of the relatives of the Brahmans, or any one, on the widow to induce her to burn.

(2) To prevent the criminal practice of drugging her to have it done.

(3) To ascertain if she had attained the age fixed by Hindu law at which they were permitted to burn themselves.

(4) If pregnant, she was not allowed to burn.

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The police were required to inquire into cases to see that they fulfilled these regulations, or to otherwise forbid the burning.

In 1817 these orders were further modified; so that, if the widow were not in good health; if she had a child under four; or if she had children under seven for whom she could not provide a suitable guardian, she was forbidden to burn. Also the family were to give due notification of the burning to the authorities, and that it was not to be left to the police to find it out. Magistrates often attended in person to see that the widow had fair play if, at the last, she wished to escape.

At this apparent government sanction of the Suttee many high-minded officials revolted. Carey and his colleagues never ceased in their agitation of the subject both in England and in India. In the twenty-one years that elapsed between Lord Wellesley's departure in 1808, and the final prohibition of the custom by Lord Bentinck in 1829, perhaps no question of Indian policy was ever so thoroughly sifted and so minutely discussed. In 1824, when Lord Amherst was Governor-General, the question was again submitted and was one of the most pressing importance, and he came, says a writer, "to the

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mortifying conclusion that it would not be wise to authorize any direct interference with a hoary custom in which the priesthood had an immediate interest. It appeared to him that the wisest course would be to trust to the progress of education, and to let Suttee die a natural death. He wrote in his minute on March, 1827: 'I am not prepared to recommend an enactment prohibiting Suttee altogether. . . . I must frankly confess, though at the risk of being considered insensible to the enormity of the evil, that I am inclined to recommend our trusting to the progress now making in the diffusion of knowledge for the gradual suppression of this detestable superstition, I cannot believe it possible that the burning, or burying alive of widows will long survive the advancement which every year brings with it in useful and rational learning.'" The next year he prophesied, "the progress of general instruction, and the unostentatious exertions of our local officers will produce the happy effect of a gradual diminution, and, at no very distant period, the final extinction of the barbarous rite of Suttee." His prophecy came true in a very short time, *but in a different way from what he prophesied.* Before that year closed Lord Bentinck was occupying the regal-chair, and on

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December 4th, 1829, an Act was passed prohibiting the Suttee under stringent penal enactments in the territories of British India.

3. The widow was thus rescued from the flames, but was left for the next twenty-seven years to the fate of what a leading reformer has appropriately called "cold Suttee." In 1856, after much agitation, Act XV. was passed by Lord Canning. This Act legalized the status of Hindu widows contracting a second marriage, and their children by such marriage. There were upwards of forty petitions against the bill, signed by from fifty to sixty thousand people, while there were only twenty-five petitions in favor of the bill bearing five thousand signatures. But this law did not preserve to the widow her civil rights, as the widow on marrying a second time, forfeits all property from her husband "as if," says the Act, "she had then died."

The change that is urged is this, that the widow who remarries shall be equally protected in her civil rights by the law, with the widow who remains unmarried. The difficulty with the framers of the bill seems to have been that, under Hindu law, a widow inherits from her husband on condition of fulfilling certain religious duties as a widow, which are for the spiritual benefit of the

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husband and his ancestors, which she could not do if she remarried. There is much said for and against this phase of the case, but, says Sir W. W. Hunter, "It is questionable whether the time has not now come to modify the forfeiture clause of the law of 1856, in regard to property which a widow inherits from her husband's will."

In the forty-three years since the enactment, it is estimated that about five hundred widows have remarried. But caste excommunicates them for it, and sometimes all their friends with them. It is this awful persecution, and the public stigma that is still attached to remarriages, that makes the Act practically inoperative up to this time. Is there no way that government, having given her permission and made it lawful for her to remarry, can protect her from persecution after marriage? Could not excommunication for doing a lawful act be made illegal? Could it not be made criminal to injure the rights of a member of the community in this way?

4. As early as 1856, Dr. Chevers in his book entitled "Medical Jurisprudence for Bengal," called attention to this question and showed that the law, as it stood, was insufficient to protect child wives. He reverts to the question in a later

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edition in 1870, and recommends an increase of the age of consent by an amendment of the penal code which, since it had become operative in 1860, had stood at ten years. The revelations Mr. Stead made in London, in November, 1885, which formed one of the factors in the raising of the age of consent in England from thirteen to sixteen, called attention to the Indian Criminal Law on the same subject in this country. Mr. Dayaram Gidimul, of the Bombay Statutory Civil Service, wrote a series of articles in the *Indian Spectator*, and brought the question more prominently before the Indian public, exposed the defects in the present law, and made a proposal for amending it. These letters were afterward published by Mr. Malabari in pamphlet form, and circulated among the leaders of native society; and, in this way, he elicited a large number of opinions in favor of the amendment. He also elicited the private opinion of the late Sir Maxwell Melville in favor of a legal remedy and published the fact. This led to the public meeting held in Bombay in 1886, to oppose any legislation whatever affecting a reform of Hindu marriage customs. The pundits of Poona also took up the matter about the same time, and waited on Lord Reay to protest against the proposal. The sub-

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ject was not allowed to rest. The W. C. T. U. ladies memorialized government on the subject. In December, 1889, the social Conference held its annual meeting in Bombay, and after warm discussion passed a resolution to government asking that the penal code be so amended as to extend protection to girls, married as well as unmarried, at least up to the age of twelve, and to treat any violation of it as felony.

In June, 1890, came the horrible death of Phulmani Dasi, a little girl under twelve years. Her husband got one year's imprisonment. The story of this little girl's death roused both the Indian and English public. In August, 1891, the Social Conference sent in their memorial to government, and this, with the rumor that the Phulmani case was likely to lead to a revival of the proposal of the amendment for raising the age of consent, were among the immediate causes of public meetings held in Madras, Satara and Poona against it. Phulmani Dasi's death, one among hundreds of such cases, brought matters to a sudden head and led the way to immediate action.

On reading the account in the papers, Mrs. Mansell, an American lady doctor at Lucknow, got up that memorable memorial to government signed by fifty-five lady doctors in India, which

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went far toward securing the amendment. A noted Indian gentleman said to us, "I thought I had known a great deal, but the facts that the petition of the lady doctors brought out were"—he shivered, his face contracted, and then he added: "horrible."

The *Indian Witness* of October, 1890, says: "These cases are too horrible and sickening in their awful details to be given to the general public. They prove to the hilt all the heavy charges brought against the system of child marriage on the ground of suffering inflicted. Death, crippling for life, agony indescribable, torture that would put a fiend to shame—these are all here. If the officials of the Indian government can read this memorial without blenching, their hearts are turned to stone." The memorial concludes: "In view of the above facts, the undersigned lady doctors and medical practitioners appeal to your Excellency's compassion to enact or introduce a measure by which the consummation of marriage will not be permitted before the wife has passed the full age of fourteen years."

A very interesting memorial was sent in signed by eighteen hundred native ladies from all over India, addressed to Her Majesty, the Queen Empress, to this effect: "We, the undersigned

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women living in India, beg most reverently to approach your Gracious Majesty with this humble petition, in the hope that your Gracious Majesty will respond to our prayer, and direct such steps to be taken as may appear meet to your Majesty to prevent a cruel wrong to which the womanhood of India is now subject. A case was recently tried in Calcutta, the circumstances of which are too horrible to relate; but, coming in the wake of several such previous cases, it emphasizes the necessity for legislation in the interests of child wives and other female minors. Well aware of the keen maternal interest your Gracious Majesty has always evinced in the welfare of your people, we venture to appeal to your Majesty for redress, and we feel confident that our appeal will not be made in vain. The remedy we seek is that the criminal law may be so altered as to protect at least girls under fourteen from their husbands, as well as from strangers." And then followed an able and exhaustive argument for the passing of the amendment.

In the early part of 1890, Mr. Malabari had gone to England hoping that the change would benefit his health. His presence there at this juncture was most opportune, and helped to bring the

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pressure of public opinion in the home-land upon the Indian government in the matter of this bill. Sir Andrew Scoble introduced the bill into the vice-regal council, January 9th, 1891. In the discussion that followed the introduction, the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, said: "Our object is simply to afford protection to those who cannot protect themselves; protection from a form of physical ill-usage which I believe to be reprobated by the most thoughtful section of the community, which is, to the best of my belief, entirely unsupported by religious sanction, and *which, under English law, is punishable with penal servitude for life.* Without any exceptions or reservations, I trust that the measure thus limited and restricted, will receive the support of public opinion, and I cordially commend it to the favorable consideration of the council."

After the most thorough sifting, as regards the religious authorities and prejudices of the people, as well as the points in their objection to the bill, it became law on March 19, 1891.

5. Aside from the Provinces that go to make up British India, there "are hundreds of native states, which still retain a greater or less degree of independence, and are ruled over by their hereditary princes. These are called Feudatory

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States. The traditional policy of the Indian government has been for the Viceroy to appoint a British resident who resides at the Capital of the Indian prince. Nepaul is the only state in India which is really independent. Many of these states are insignificant both in size and importance. Only twelve have a population of over a million. Hyderabad and Mysore are the largest, the former with a population of about ten million and the latter of about four million."

This last state, Mysore, is in Southern India; and in 1894, the Maharajah, since deceased, seconded by his very able and well-known counsellor, Mr. Chentsalrao, passed an act prohibiting the marriage of girls under eight years of age, and forbidding the marriage of old men over fifty years with young girls under fourteen years. The act went into operation six months afterward, and the punishment of any violation was six months' imprisonment, or a fine not exceeding five hundred rupees.

There was not much agitation, though it was brought into force greatly against the wish of many of the people, even of some of the educated sections. It was the act of the Maharajah himself, who was an enlightened man. A friend who has lived many years in Mysore writes us:

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"The Act is on the whole working well. There has been a tendency for magistrates to inflict lenient fines. I fear the Act is not always fearlessly carried out. I know of one case where an old man married a child wife, contrary to the provisions of the Act, but, because he was connected with the palace, no prosecution took place. My own opinion is that the Act has had a very beneficial effect upon the people.

"The chief influence has been educative, and I believe it will soon become a custom to marry at the time fixed by government. The people have realized that it is not necessary to have their children marry so early. Those who were anxious to move in that direction have had their hands strengthened; and those eager for early marriages have been restrained. But the Act only touches the fringe of a great subject. If the true marriageable age could be raised to thirteen or fourteen, a great advance would have been made."

The secretary to the government of Mysore reported that in 1895–1896, thirty-nine persons were prosecuted in sixteen cases, and twenty-six persons were convicted in thirteen cases. The Social Conference that met in 1898, at Madras, congratulates itself on the fairly successful workings of this Act, and expresses the hope it will

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encourage other native states to follow the example of Mysore.

The Maharajah of Jeypore, a small Rajput state, after consulting the highest religious authorities at his court, has also fixed the marriageable age of girls in his state at fourteen.

6. A bill has been proposed for the prevention of child marriage in the presidency of Madras. This movement began to take shape in 1897. The Madras Presidency is the foremost on all subjects of reform of any part of British India. The different social conferences in the presidency expressed a conviction "that the time had come for applying to government for legislation on the subject to fix at least the marriageable age for boys, if not for girls; and to lay down a maximum limit of age for old persons who marry young girls on the plan adopted by the Mysore government."

The *Hindu Social Reform Association* appointed a committee to draw up a memorial on the same subject. "The province of Mysore borders on this presidency, and is inhabited by people most of whose institutions, customs, manners and religious observances are identical with those of the people in Madras. People of Madras of all castes have largely settled them-

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selves in Mysore, and *vice versa*, and intermarriages between people of Mysore and this presidency are not uncommon. If a useful measure like the present one could be successfully attempted in any part of British India, this presidency, which has so much in common with Mysore, is best fitted for its introduction." So writes the framer of one of the bills.

Two bills were drafted proposing the marriageable age of girls to be eight years, with an imprisonment of three months or a fine, or both, for any violation of the Act. This proposal the government rejected as being in advance of public opinion. It is a question that, sooner or later, government will have to face; and we believe it made a mistake in refusing its sanction to this bill. A resolution was passed at the last Annual National Social Congress that says:

"The Congress learns with regret that the government of India has refused to sanction the introduction of the Infant Marriage Prevention Bills in the Local Legislative Council of Madras, on the ground that in its opinion the measures proposed were in advance of public opinion. As both the Marriage Bills were drafted on the lines of the Mysore Marriage Resolutions, and fixed the minimum limits below the ages which are now observed by most classes of the people, the Conference hopes that, if the facts are properly placed before the government, it will be satisfied that the bills were not open to the objection taken to them. The Conference, therefore, recommends that

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early steps should be taken by the Social Reform Association to memorialize government with a view that it may be persuaded to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to ascertain the advance made by public opinion on this subject, and to advise government on the action it should take in this matter."

7. Though affecting only the natives of the district of Malabar, in the Madras Presidency, and dealing with a sectional difficulty, the Malabar Marriage Law, passed in 1896, is a measure of importance. It was introduced and conducted through the Madras Legislative Council by the Hon. Mr. C. Sankarao Nair, to whose perseverance, tact and moderation the success of this, the first attempt at social legislation on the initiative of a non-official member of council, is entirely due. The law provides for the registration of marriages between members of the Malabar community, thus giving a legal basis to what has hitherto been a purely social institution.

8. There has also been passed an Act bearing upon the restitution of conjugal rights. This law is not native to India; is neither Hindu nor Mohammedan; but is an English law that was imported into India. It is enforced by imprisonment. In 1885 the celebrated Rakhmabai case was tried under this law. One judge dismissed the case, as revolting to all sense of justice to

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compel a woman to consummate a marriage that had been arranged against her will, and without her consent. But the High Court decided in favor of the man. In 1890, when Mr. Malabari was in England, he got up a very influential committee on the subject of Reform of Indian Marriage Laws. They sent in a memorial to the Indian government, asking for four reforms. One was that the age of consent be raised to twelve, which was done; and resolution three was "that the suit for Restitution of Conjugal Rights, which is founded on ecclesiastical law, *and has been repudiated in its coercive form in all countries of Europe,* and OUGHT NEVER TO HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO INDIA; that the continued prosecution of such a suit is likely to produce injustice; and that the whole requires reconsideration at the hands of government with a due regard to the marriage laws and the habits and customs of the people of India."

In 1894 a bill came before the Legislative Council proposing an amendment to the effect that imprisonment be left to the discretion of the judges. It did not touch a Hindu custom, it was a ruling imported from England, and the opposition of a part of the Bengal press to the amendment is inexplicable.

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The bill was not passed. The law remains today. It is an injustice to womankind, and exists in no other country. No woman can be imprisoned in India for debt. Truly, this is a law that disfigures the statue-book. It was not in deference to Hindu law, or custom, that Rakhmabai lost her case; but under this English law that was practically obsolete at the time in England; and by the defeat of this case, the hand on the dial of the cause of womanhood was put backward ten years.

9. The India Universities, of which there are five, located at Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore and Allahabad, are all open to women; a fact of which we are justly proud, and in which we are ahead of the history of Western Universities. Perhaps we reaped the fruit of the agitation that opened the door of Western Universities to women. On the page referring to "Examinations, Honors and Degrees" in the calendar of the Bombay University, is the following unique sentence: "In the following regulations the pronoun 'he' and its derivatives are used to denote either sex, the male or female." We shall be glad when the heavy inequality between man and woman shall be removed in other departments of life, and when the rights of "she, hers

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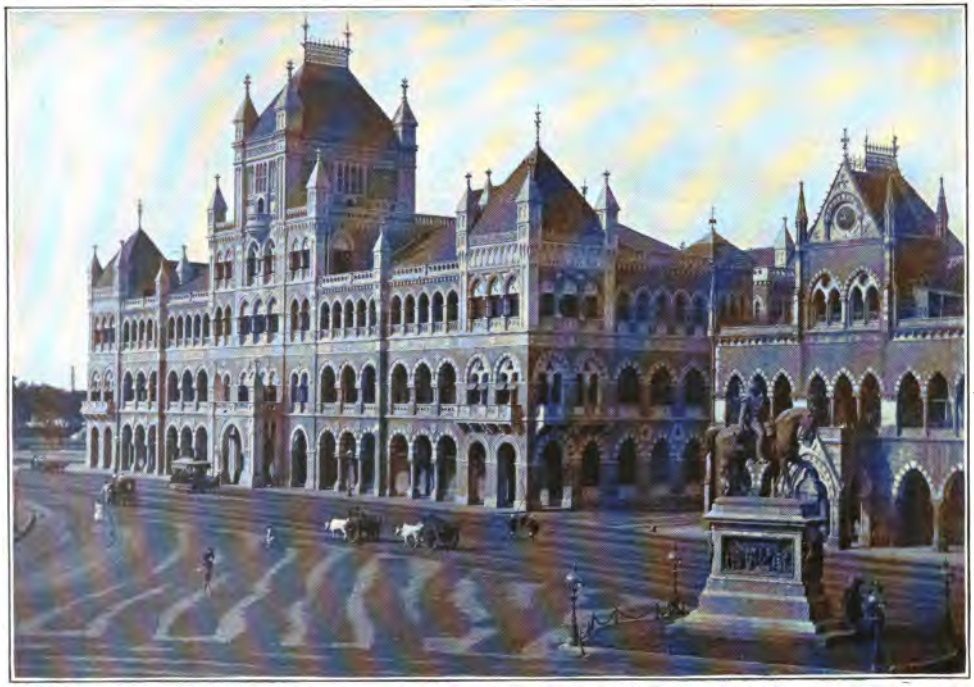

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and her" shall more nearly equal those of "he, his and him."

10. The Countess of Dufferin's scheme, or the National Association for supplying medical aid for woman, has also received gratifying attention.

The government of India has a fully equipped medical department for all India; and you will find hospitals and dispensaries in every town of almost any size. But as nearly five million women live behind the *purdah*, and would not see a male practitioner; and as many more, though not behind the *purdah*, are of the same opinion; consequently, they often suffer severely from the malpractice of ignorant doctors, and especially at the hands of the ignorant, bungling, superstitious midwives. Said a lady doctor recently in a distant city, with great indignation: "I should like to hang every one in the city."

In 1869, the American Methodist's Foreign Missionary Society sent Miss Clara Swain to India, the first woman physician with a diploma that ever set foot in Asia. Later the Indian Female Normal School Society sent Miss Bielby to Lucknow, whose name will ever be associated with the origin of Lady Dufferin's scheme. For many years, lady missionaries alone carried on

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medical work for women in India. Then came the following break:

Miss Bielby was called to Punna, to attend the Maharajah's wife who was ill. She devoted herself to the sick lady, and was about to return to her work in Lucknow. In the meantime, the Rani had learned that Miss Bielby was about leaving for England. In bidding her good-bye, she dismissed all her ladies and attendants so that she could be alone with Miss Bielby, and said to her: "You are going to England, and I want you to tell the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the men and women of England, what the women of India suffer when they are sick. Will you promise me?" She then explained that she asked for no change in their social condition, but relief from cruel suffering; and begged Miss Bielby to give the message in person. Miss Bielby explained the great difficulty she would have in getting access to the queen. "But," insisted the Rani, "did you not tell me that our queen was good and gracious; that she never heard of sorrow without sending a message to say how sorry she was, and trying to help?" The Rani insisted on dictating a message: "Write it small, for I want to put it into a locket, and you are to wear this locket around

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your neck till you see our great queen, and give it to her yourself: you are not to send it through another."

When the queen heard, through some of her court ladies, of Miss Bielby's work and message, she determined to see her and hear all for herself. Her Majesty listened with great interest, and asked many questions; and, turning to her ladies said: "We had no idea it was as bad as this; something must be done for these poor creatures." The queen accepted the locket and gave a message which might be given to every one with whom Miss Bielby spoke on the subject of such suffering of the women in India:

"WE SHOULD WISH IT GENERALLY KNOWN THAT WE SYMPATHIZE WITH EVERY EFFORT MADE TO RELIEVE THE SUFFERING OF THE WOMEN OF INDIA."

The subject attracted much attention in England; and, as Lord Dufferin was just about to sail for India as the viceroy-elect, the queen desired Lady Dufferin to do all in her power in this direction. This is the touching story of the origin of the National Association which was organized after Lady Dufferin reached India in August, 1885. It was one movement for India that was received by Hindus and Mohammedans with acclamation, and which received their sup-

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port, both in sympathy and money. And though it is not a Government Act, and does not properly come under the heading of this chapter, yet it has had the patronage of the Queen-Empress and of the Viceroy, and seemed fitting to be classed with the other efforts for reform.

11. Female Education: government has done a good deal in this line in establishing schools and encouraging education for women; but we expect to treat this matter more fully in a later chapter.

Besides all these enactments, there are a few minor provisions, both in the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, which protect woman, especially Sections 372 and 373. Besides, widows in the Bombay Presidency have greater privileges in the line of inheritance from their husbands, and in the disposal of the same, than widows in other parts of India. This is due probably to the influential part played by Mahratta Princesses during the time of Shivaji and his successors. The Mahrattas were once a freer and more warlike race than most of the peoples in India, which probably insured greater freedom to their women.

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XIV

WHAT THE REFORMERS HAVE DONE

SIR MONIER WILLIAMS says that "as often as pantheistic and polytheistic ideas have been pushed to preposterous extremes in India, a reaction has always taken place toward simple monotheism; that the reformers, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallaba and Chaitanya, who arose in the twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, all taught the existence of one supreme personal God, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, maker and preserver of all things, whom they called Vishnu, and whom they believed to be distinct from the human soul and the material world. But none of them succeeded in counteracting the corrupt tendencies inherent in the Vaishnava system, and notwithstanding the partial reformation accomplished, the tide of degrading idolatrous practices set in more strongly than ever.

"Then followed the monotheistic reaction, led by Kabir in the sixteenth century, and improved upon shortly afterward by Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. These movements were, in

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a great measure, due to Mohammedan influences. Both Kabir and Nanak did their best to purify the Augean stable of corrupt Hindu doctrine. They even tried to unite Hindus and Mohammedans on the common ground of belief in the unity of the godhead. In the former they had only a limited success and in the latter were wholly unsuccessful." [1]

Close upon the heels of the Mohammedan invasion which had induced the reaction led by Kabir and Nanak in the sixteenth century, there entered, through the arrival of the English in the seventeenth century, the beginnings of a power and influence destined to lead to reform, and eventually we believe to transform India, namely, Christian truth.

Says Sir Monier Williams: "Everywhere at the great centres of British authority, a mighty stir of thought began to be set in motion, and able men educated by us made no secret of their dissatisfaction with the national religion, and their desire for a purer faith than that received from their fathers. At the moment when thoughtful Hindus were thus asking for light and leading, the right leader appeared. The Hindu reformation inaugurated by RAM MOHUN

[1] "Religious Thought and Life in India." (1883.)

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Roy, was the first reformation due to Christian influences, and to the diffusion of European ideas through English education. He was the first modern theistical reformer of what may be called British India."[1]

This man was born in North India, in 1774; a Brahman, whose father held offices under the Mogul Emperor. That his son might rise to some such place, the father had him educated in Persian and Arabic, which of course included the Koran, and which startled his mind into questions of religious reform. At the age of sixteen he wrote a spirited attack against idolatry; and in later years he was most vigorous in his public attacks upon the same evil. On his advent in Calcutta, he gathered about him men of sympathetic spirit, and in January, 1830, he organized the Hindu Unitarian church and set on foot the Theistic movement now so well known in India.

He was the contemporary of the Serampore missionaries and Dr. Duff. He was the first prominent reformer that battled for the cause of women. He was one of the leading spirits in the agitation for the abolishment of the Suttee, and wrote articles and booklets denouncing the practice, and proving that it had no Vedic sanc-

[1] "Religious Thought and Life in India." (1883.)

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tion. Besides, when he—the first native of rank and influence, who had ventured to break through the inveterate prejudices of centuries—arrived in England in 1831, he was present when the famous memorial "affirming that the act of the Suttee was not only a sacred duty, but an exalted privilege, denouncing the prohibition as a breach of the promise that there should be no interference with the religious customs of the Hindus, and begging for its restoration," was sent by Lord Wm. Bentinck to the Privy Council. When presented to His Lordship, he had refused to rescind the act, but offered to transmit it to the Privy Council. Ram Mohun Roy's presence in England at the time was a good antidote to the memorial, and no doubt helped in its defeat, as did also the influence of Lord Wellesley, Grant, and others.

Those early days in India were stirring times of which there is little history and little reliable data; but it was the birth time of the reform thought that has spread all over India. Only here and there, now, can we find much trace of it; here an article written by some enthusiast on the condition of widows, and there a strong denunciation of child marriage, or of some other evil that enthralled women.

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Dr. Duff one evening found the subject of debate in a debating society of some fifty Hindu students to be "Whether females ought to be educated." As to the theory of the subject, they ended in being unanimous. One married youth exclaimed, "Is it alleged that female education is prohibited, if not by the letter, at least by the spirit of some of our shastras? If any of the shastras be found to advance what is so contrary to reason, I, for one, will trample them under my feet." Says Dr. Duff's biographer: "It was of societies where such questions were discussed, that a vernacular newspaper exclaimed: 'The night of desolation and ignorance is beginning to change its black aspect, and the sky, big with fate, is about to bring forth a storm of knowledge which will sweep those airy battlements away that have so long imprisoned that tide of thought.'"

The next in order is ISHWAR CHANDRA VIDIASAGAR, who led the agitation out of which rose the bill for the remarriage of widows, in 1855-1856. He was the learned and eminent principal of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. He was the son of a poor Brahman, but he had a remarkable mother, and it is said that it was from her that he received the inspiration to work for widows.

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On one occasion a child widow came to her house, and she was so moved with pity that with tears in her eyes she said to her son: "Thou hast read to the end of the *shastras*, and hast thou found no sanction yet for the remarriage of widows?" This question first turned the attention of her son to the great subject that engrossed much of his life, and led finally to the passing of the above Act. His espousal of the cause of women was very earnest, and his proving that the refusal of remarriage to widows had no Vedic sanction had great weight because of his reputed position as a Sanskrit scholar. In a pamphlet on the subject of the remarriage of widows he pathetically exclaims, after speaking of the power mere custom has: "When men consider the observance of mere forms as the highest of duties and the greatest of virtues, in such a country would that women were never born. Woman! In India thy lot is cast in misery!" Such language to-day would be called sentimental and exaggerated. But so far as we can learn, Mr. I. C. Vidiasagar remained a most orthodox Hindu all his life, and to him, possibly more than any other man, is due the existence of the Act whereby a widow can remarry, provided she and her friends are brave enough.

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His statue was recently unveiled at the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta. The unveiling of the statue is a significant incident inaugurating a new phase of public life in India in commemorating the lives of useful men, and of making a link between the past and present. But considering the fact that the majority of Hindus still practically refuse remarriage to their widows, there is a touch of irony in the action. The abolition of the custom would have been a more enduring and fitting monument to his name than any block of sculptured marble.

Later on came the wonderful career of KESHUB CHUNDER SEN. In 1870, on his return from his visit to England, he inaugurated a number of reforms. When in England the *Times* and the *Echo* had struck him with the irresistible power of English public opinion in exposing wrong, encouraging right, and educating the common people. With the ready instinct of a true reformer, he started the *Sulav Samachar* (*Cheap News*) in November, 1870. It was a weekly *pice* paper, the first enterprise of its kind in India, and it made a great sensation, meeting with unexpected success. Three or four thousand copies were sold weekly, and classes who had never handled a newspaper before, began to eagerly

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read and pay for it. This stimulated repeated imitation, not only in Bengal, but all over India, till, at the present moment, cheap journalism has become a widespread institution, and has created a public opinion which the government itself is obliged to respect."[1]

Keshub Chunder Sen was so delighted with the intelligence and refinement of the women of England that he did all in his power to raise the status of women in this country. He started a normal school for native ladies, which was attended daily by nearly fifty high caste Hindu ladies from the Zenanas. Government was so pleased as to give an annual grant of two thousand rupees toward its support; and the improvement of women's condition took on a new impetus from that time.

A kind of Ladies' Club was also started, in which ladies read and discussed papers. Similar societies now exist in Madras and Bombay. Perhaps the most important measure he brought about, that affects women, was the Brahmo-marriage Bill that was passed largely through Mr. Sen's efforts, on March 19th, 1872; which is practically a way for the performance of a civil marriage between any two natives regardless of

[1] "Life of Keshub Chunder Sen," by Protap Moozamdar.

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caste or society. The only drawback to it is that the marrying parties have to declare that they do not profess the Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, Parsee, Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain religion. This has kept it from being more popular than it is, though a number of very interesting marriages have been made possible by it. On December 2d, 1898, a most interesting intermarriage occurred at Madras, which was possible only through this Act; and which we hope will prove to be a forerunner of many more. The brave couple, of different castes, were Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu, M. B., C. M. (Edin.) Medical Officer to His Highness the Nizam's Imperial Service Troops, Hyderabad; and Miss Sarojini Chattopadhyay. As an illustration of the possibilities of present day reform, we quote a paragraph from an Indian newspaper:

"Mrs. Ram Mohan Roy, a Brahmo lady of culture and refinement, acted as the bridesmaid and added grace and beauty to the solemnity of the occasion. The ceremony opened with a prayer by Mr. S. Somasundarum Pillai, B. A.; and after the prescribed rituals had been gone through, Rao Bahadur Pandit Veerasalingam Pantulu Guru, officiated as the minister for the sacred occasion. After the minister's charge to the happy couple regarding the responsibilities of life, Dr. Aghorenath gave away the bride and united the pair in holy wedlock in due form, the marriage being solemnized in the presence of Mr. F. D. Bird, the Registrar of Marriages of Madras Town. Rao

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Bahadur Pandit Veerasalingam Pantulu Guru then pronounced the benediction. Before the several guests dispersed, some refreshments were served and partaken with very great cheers amidst toasts and replies in perfect harmony without any distinction of caste. During the short time they spent in the Brahmo Mandir the couple received the hearty congratulations of all friends present and drove off to Capper House Hotel, where Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu has been staying. Dr. and Mrs. Govindarajulu left Madras for Hyderabad on Sunday evening.

"This interesting event must be regarded as unique in many respects, and as marking an epoch in the history of the reform movement in this country. The bridegroom belongs to the Balija community, whereas the bride is a Brahman by birth; the former is a Madrasi, whereas the latter is a Bengali; and both are England-returned Hindus. Dr. Govidarajulu Naidu, M. B. C. M., completed his medical course in England, and his wife, a Matriculate of the Madras University, spent a couple of years there to receive higher education."

Mr. Sen also set on foot another agitation on the subject of ascertaining the proper marriageable age of Hindu girls. As President of the Indian Reform Association, he addressed, in April, 1871, a circular letter to the most eminent medical authorities in India wishing to have their opinion on the question. This agitation and the medical opinions obtained were most helpful in educating public opinion on the subject. In a speech in the Town Hall in Calcutta, he thus summarized the views received:

"The medical authorities in Calcutta unanimously declare that sixteen is the minimum marriageable age of girls in this

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country. Dr. Charles makes a valuable suggestion: he holds that fourteen, being the commencement of adolescence, may for the present be regarded as the minimum age at which native girls may be allowed to marry, and may serve as a starting point for reform in this direction. In conformity with his suggestion, and the opinions given by the other referees, we have come to the conclusion that, for the present at least, it would be expedient to follow the provision in the bill which makes fourteen the minimum marriageable age of girls in this country, leaving it in the hands of time to develop this reform slowly and gradually into maturity and fullness."

Thus, under the Brahmo-Marriage Bill, that was afterward changed to the name of the Native Marriage Act, (and is in substance a Civil Marriage Bill) the husband was bound to complete the age of eighteen, and the wife fourteen; and also under this Act, bigamy, polygamy and infant marriages were made impossible in the Brahmo-Samaj.

The tide of reform kept swelling until 1881, when a new reformer appeared on the scene. This time not a Hindu, but a Parsee, MR. B. H. MALABARI, who right royally espoused the cause of women, especially in respect to "enforced widowhood and child marriage." The next decade, 1881-1891, forms what we feel has been so far the "golden age" of social reform in India. "It was the widow," wrote Malabari in 1885, "who first set me thinking about the whole

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question." It will be best to let his biographer tell his story.

"Malabari was not a Sanskrit scholar like Ram Mohun Roy, or Vidiasagar; and he was not a Hindu. But he felt vividly the sin, the folly, the unnaturalness of this custom of infant marriage, and traced the woes of widowhood to this cause. How this pernicious custom could be abolished was a question which long perplexed him. He knew full well the economy of Hindu homes; he was not unaware that many of these were happy homes in a way. But was there not a large amount of misery which could be easily avoided? And was not this practice a dead obstacle in the way of female education and of national progress? The evil was universally admitted; and surely it could not be an evil without a remedy?

"He was thoroughly familiar with the tremendous difficulties of the Hindu reformers and the fate which had overtaken some of them. A Hindu sovereign could have easily put an end to such practices if convinced of their illegality from the Shastric texts. But an alien government was a *Kumbha karan* (A Sleeping Giant) in social matters, extremely difficult to awaken to a sense of its responsibility; while the strong-

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hold of Hindu usage and superstition was harder to conquer than *Ravan's Lanka.*

"What, then, was an outsider to do for the victims of these baneful customs? Was he to fold his arms, and do nothing because he was an outsider? Had humanity as a whole any outsiders *within itself?* . . . Was it not the plain duty of every man to do what lay in his power to mitigate the hard lot of his brothers and sisters? Were not the suffering child-brides, and the suffering Hindu widows, with their heads shaved for the sin of losing their husbands, his own sisters, though he was a Parsee? . . . Was it not clear that female education would never make any appreciable progress so long as girls had to be married in their tender years? Had not Keshub Chunder Sen proved by the opinions of medical experts in India that infant marriage led to an unnaturally early development of functions that were in the long run ruinous to the physical, and therefore to the mental strength of the nation? Was it not infant marriage again that led mainly to enforced and unhappy widowhood?

"Having resolved to devote himself to the eradication of these evils, Malabari next thought about the ways and means, and about the plan

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of his campaign. He knew who had abolished Suttee and Infanticide. He was averse to legislation on the subjects which had interested him so deeply; but he thought the moral support of the State was essential. Jotting down his thoughts in the form of 'notes,' he presented himself one day in May or June, 1884, to Lord Ripon the Viceroy, at Simla." [1]

Mr. Malabari received a most sympathetic hearing not only from the Viceroy but from other members of the government. He had a large number of his "notes" printed and circulated among official and non-official persons. The press discussed them freely, and they were translated by the native papers into almost all the vernaculars of India. For the first time the wrongs of Indian women were thus put before all India, or that which would be representative.

In September, 1884, the supreme government forwarded the "notes" to all local governments for their opinion, and that they might consult representatives of native opinion. In October 8, 1886, government replied in the negative to the measures proposed for legislation in his "notes," some of which, after a lapse of years, seem unpractical, and justify the negation. Government

[1] Life and labors of Mr. B. H. Malabari.

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in its reply, after stating the case, and its usual policy in all such matters, added:

"Although there is much to be said in favor of each of these suggestions, the Governor-General in council, as at present advised, would prefer not to interfere even to the limited extent proposed, by legislative action until sufficient proof is forthcoming that legislation has been asked for by a section, important in influence or number, of the Hindu community itself."

The events that followed the publication of Mr. Malabari's "notes," from 1884 until 1891, have had no parallel in any period of social reform in India. In the following January, 1885, came the Surat widow's appeal to the Nagar Shett; the Nowsari widows' appeal to the Gaikwar in April; the campaign of Malabari in the Punjab in September and October on these subjects. The effect produced by the revelations of Mr. Stead, in November, led to a series of articles in the *Indian Spectator* by Mr. Dayaram Gidumul, which called attention to the Indian Criminal Code on the same subject, pointing out its defects, and proposing that the age of consent be raised, which Mr. Malabari afterward published in pamphlet form; and their distributation throughout India elicited a large number of opinions in favor of the proposal. Then followed the strong advocacy of legislation on the

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subject of Infant Marriage by Justice Renade in December, in an able preface to a collection of papers bearing on the enactment of Act 15, of 1856. The following February (1886) Mr. Malabari made another tour throughout the northwest. This led to the memorial of Sir T. Madhavrao and other leading citizens of Madras to the Viceroy (Lord Dufferin), in March, 1886, for fixing the marriageable age of Hindu girls at ten; and the Meerut Memorial, in August, 1886, praying that the limit of age be fixed at twelve for girls and sixteen for boys; the Madhav Bagh meeting in Bombay, in September, 1886, to protest against any legislative interference; an interview of the *Shastris* with Lord Reay, a few days later, on the same subject: The publication of an article on the Hindu widow by Mr. Devandranath Das in *The Nineteenth Century*, and another in *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* by Sir William Hunter; the final resolution of the government of India on Malabari's "notes," refusing legislation in October, 1886: the publication of the opinions of Hindu gentlemen consulted on the subject in the form of *Government Selections*, in January, 1887; the attacks on Mr. Malabari and Justice Renade, by some of the Poona lecturers in February; and the publication of opinions given to Mr. Malabari in

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the form of a companion volume to the *Government Selections.*

We must not forget to mention the efforts of Mr. Madhavdas Raganathdas, the first Guzerati Hindu to marry a widow in Bombay; his persecutions from his castemen; his brave stand in opening the Widow Remarriage Hall; and his financial help and social protection of other couples who wished to remarry. These events, keeping up an intense public interest in these questions proposed for social reform, were generally accentuated by the celebrated case of Rakhmabai that occurred in 1885, stirring all India, and bringing into great prominence the whole question of child marriage; also, the forming of the National Social Congress of India, held for the first time in December, 1887, in Madras; and public interest culminating in the awful case of Phulmani Dasi in Calcutta. This led to the famous memorial of the lady doctors to government, which was in itself a great public educator; and the memorial of the fifteen hundred native ladies to the Queen; Mr. Malabari's visit to England that helped to rouse English public opinion: and finally the passing of the Age of Consent Bill, in 1891, whereby the age of consent was raised from ten to twelve, which completed a

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decade of public agitation on the subject of child marriage and enforced widowhood such as India had never seen before; and, we add with sadness, has never seen since.

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XV

SINCE 1891

In the preceding chapter we were able to give only the merest outline of reform activities, giving only the names of the prominent leaders, and leaving unmentioned many men whose names are very familiar throughout India on these subjects, and whose writings and words are quoted as authoritative. But we would not altogether overlook the individuals, often unknown to the general public, and unsupported by any of its favor, who in personal matters have made attempts to live out their convictions.

Some years ago, a Brahman friend of ours kept his little girl unmarried till she was twelve years of age, an unheard of thing at that time in so small a place. When he desired to marry her, a bridegroom of the kind he would have liked, and which his position would have entitled him to procure, could not be found, as the girl was too old to be an eligible match. So he married her to a boy of poor but respectable parentage, and then had him educated at his own expense.

We know of a well-known Bombay gentle-

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man who kept his daughter unmarried till she was sixteen; and of another marriage that was a real marriage for love, and an ideal one, and which we trust will prove an earnest of what is yet to be in India. Her father was one of India's most enlightened men. She was widowed at fifteen. Three years later an Indian gentleman saw her and sought her hand in marriage. But the parents and the girl had not the courage for the difficulties that the remarriage of a widow in their family would plunge them into. But the man, Jacob like, waited patiently seven years for his bride, and finally consent was gained. The bride at marriage was twenty-five and the husband thirty-five. It can be said of them that "they were married and lived happy ever afterward;" for it has been a happy union.

After ten years of wonderful activity, the curtain dropped with the closing act, the raising of the age of consent, in 1891. Since 1892, the curtain has risen again on different scenes, and with different actors on the stage. There is a very evident retrograde movement in matters of social reform; and matters political and religious have taken their place. Government, since passing the Age of Consent Bill, has been intensely conservative and disinclined to move in matters

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social. The Mysore and the Malabar Marriage Bills have been the only special advance steps. The Madras Marriage Bill unhappily was rejected. In place of agitation there is on all hands a feeling of discouragement and conservatism. Looking over the English columns of the files of a number of leading native journals in Western India, for last year, we found not a half dozen references to matters of social reform in them.

What has been the cause of all this change of front? What has caused this retrograde movement? Up to the close of 1891-92, so much was hoped from the reformers. Everything seemed ripe for a great movement. How did it happen that the reformers lost so great an opportunity?

Since 1891, almost another decade has been completed, and we believe a key to the situation will be found in reviewing the events of these years.

In 1894, came the great and cruel religious riot in Bombay, between the Hindus and Mohammedans; and the spirit it engendered throughout the country between these two races resulted in one or two smaller riots in other places. It was a time of great anxiety, and was probably treated by government as an illustration of what might take place if there was legislative interference

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with customs that were held as religious by the people, no matter how necessary the reform might be.

The interests of the years 1895–96 were chiefly political. A great stir and a great deal of feeling was caused by the Exchange Compensation Allowance that was sanctioned by government to English officials. It was looked upon as unjust to native interests. Then in Western India, Lord Sandhurst, the Bombay Governor, refused to have any further dealings with the *Sarwa Fanik* (Universal) Sabha, because some of the signatures to a memorial from it to government were not genuine. During this period the National Congress was more influential than now, and heavily criticised the government expenditures both military and civil, which, it was said, impoverished the country.

There was also at this time, in Western India, a marked revival of the Gunpati festival, which had both a political and religious significance. Mr Tilak, the editor of the *Mahratta*, made a public lament that the place where the body of Shivaji—the founder of the Mahratta kingdom—had been cremated had been allowed to go to ruin. He upbraided his countrymen for want of patriotism, and suggested that it be repaired.

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This proposal the governor thought might be a good thing, and favored it. The anniversary of Shivaji's death, occurring near the Gunpati festival, was incorporated into it, and both were celebrated with unheard of display, and also became the occasion of speeches and songs, that, to say the least, were not flattering at times to the government. The religious element arose out of the riot of 1894, when the Hindus determined if possible, in the Gunpati festival, to outrival the Mohammedan *Mohorrum* festival. The movement is now dying away, but it was an episode the widespread impressions of which were not altogether pleasant or helpful. At the close of 1896, the famine, which like a great vulture had been hovering over the country for many months, finally settled down upon it.

In 1897–1898, the famine and the plague overshadowed every interest; discouraged, disheartened and paralyzed all movements; and for the time quite engulfed all other questions. Add to this, the distressing earthquakes in Eastern India; the murder of the two European officials, Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst, in Poona; the arrest of Mr. Tilak, the editor of the *Mahratta* for seditious writings; the detaining of the Nathu brothers in custody without trial; the frontier

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war; the measures taken by government in regard to the plague, which greatly irritated the people and led to another riot in Bombay; the execution of Damodar Hari Chapakar, and the recent arrest of his two brothers, and their confessions concerning the Poona murders which have made all parties shudder; and, it is feared that the cold-blooded murder of these officials has put back the cause of national and social progress for a quarter of a century. These events of the last three years, with the plague still stalking about and threatening the whole country, have absorbed the attention of the people and the papers, and have so taken up the attention of the government that the miseries and wrongs of woman have almost seemed forgotten.

Some of these events have had a most disastrous effect on the relations between the government and the people. Government has suspected the people of disloyalty; and the people, for many causes, have been much irritated toward government.

Then another cause, which these events have only accentuated, has been a growing desire for individuality as a nation, and to be recognized as such by the civilized nations of the earth. The liberal Western Education that government has

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so freely given, has been one of the factors in bringing this desire "for a conscious political whole" into prominence; while contact with the outside world has made it inevitable.

This state of mind has made possible the entrance of another disastrous check to social reform, in the beginnings of what is now called a "Hindu Revival." It has arisen from a variety of causes, but the most prominent actor in it, at present, is Mrs. Annie Besant, an English lady, who has already passed through a variety of religious beliefs previous to her present career.

On her visit to India, in 1893, we believe, she is reported to have said in Bangalore "that she was a Hindu in a former birth, and is visiting her own land after a sojourn in the west, where she was reincarnated to know the nature of materialistic civilization of the west;" and in Tinnevelly she is reported to have said: "Western civilization, with all its discoveries in science, is nothing compared with Hindu civilization."

In her present visit, she has settled at Benares, and has been the means of starting the Hindu college there. In a letter to the *Statesman* (Calcutta), she speaks of the "religious revival in which I am myself sufficiently fortunate to be allowed to take a part;" of a "truly national

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Hindu education;" and of the college she says: "The movement is one of national importance, combining western culture and religious and moral teaching according to the Hindu *shastras;* that the college aims at reproducing the ancient type of the Aryan gentleman; pious, dutiful, loyal, strong, brave and industrious; with healthy body and well balanced mind." The college is a fact, while the hope exists of starting similar colleges all over the country. Says the *Indian Witness:*

"We imagine the leaders of Hindu society must have deep searchings of heart these days in contemplation of the straits to which their religious and social system is reduced. The herculean efforts of Mrs. Besant to galvanize somnolent Hinduism into some degree of animation must appeal to the sense of the humorous in thoughtful Hindus. Imagine the situation: a foreigner, a *woman!* seeking to avert the chill of death from the body politic of Hinduism! A *woman* endeavoring with might and main to extort from apathetic Hindus the funds with which to start a Hindu college which is expected, among other feats, to extirpate all disloyalty from the bosoms of young Hindus!"

Then came the arrival of Swami Vevekanand,

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in 1896, who was received in India as a conquering hero by many, and his journey from Ceylon to Calcutta was a sort of triumphal march. We consider his notoriety a free and unsought gift from the Parliament of Religions to India; for he was practically unknown till then, and the success he was reputed to have achieved in the West has won him reverence here. Two disciples have joined him. One, a Miss Noble, said to be an American, and who has recently been advocating the worship of the goddess *Kali* in Calcutta; the other, a very recent arrival; Miss Marie Louise, or Swami Abhayananda, a lady who is said to have had as many spiritual changes as Mrs. Besant, and who has been described by a native journal as "French by extraction, American by domicile, Shaiva by faith, Vaishnava in neck ornamentation, Vendantin by philosophy, and a *sunnyasin* (ascetic), in her mode of life."

We do not see any public utterances on the part of these ladies concerning the condition of the women of India. Being ladies, we should expect they would be deeply distressed at the social condition of women in this country, and the disabilities under which they suffer. We should think the first question that would confront them, as they see the situation, would be,

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Why has not this beautiful philosophy, which we have come so far to study on its native soil, done more for Hindu women?

Where did these three ladies get their freedom, their religious liberty? Was it from Hinduism? In December, 1893, a committee of seven from the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association wrote Mrs. Besant, asking for an interview to obtain her views on these social questions. She replied that "any questions of the important character you suggest, could not be wisely made at an interview between myself and a body of gentlemen; the memory of each might easily prove unreliable, and so misunderstanding and controversy as to what was said might arise. If any questions are submitted to me in writing, I will read them, and if I wish to express any opinion on any of them, I will do so also in writing."

The gentlemen renewed their request, promising that they would furnish a competent shorthand reporter to take down what was said, and to allow her to revise what was written. They also furnished her ten written questions which she might have time to ponder over before the interview, and not be taken by surprise. This Mrs. Besant refused to do, saying, "Hasty or imperfect expression of opinion on these matters

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is dangerous, and in a person whose views are so widely read, reprehensible. You must therefore permit me to choose my own time and way of expressing my thoughts on these subjects, and to decline to express them in answers which would necessarily give a very imperfect, and therefore misleading idea of my attitude toward these problems."

The question began with a preamble stating "that ninety-nine per cent. of the Hindu women in all castes are illiterate. Among the Brahmans, girls are, on peril of excommunication, married before they reach puberty, often very much before. They are married between the ages of three and twelve. Once a marriage takes place it cannot be dissolved under any circumstances, as far as the woman is concerned. Thousands of girls are widowed before they attain age, and cannot re-marry without social ostracism. In some of the non-Brahman castes these conditions also prevail. Is the position of women in these respects consistent with your conception of what the position of women ought to be?

2. Is it right for a man to take a second wife when the first is living, on the sole ground of her being childless?

3. Is it proper that girls below twelve years

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of age should be given away in marriage by their parents or guardians to men of fifty, sixty or seventy years of age?

4. Is it desirable that a class of women called dancing girls, who are invariably prostitutes, should be given a status in Hindu temples during worship, and in Hindu homes on festive occasions, as singers or dancers?

5. What do you think of the system prevalent in parts of this country called the zenana-system, by which women are compelled to keep out of sight of all men except their husbands, and their nearest male relatives; and are not allowed to move about except in closed carriages, or when veiled from head to foot?

After two or three other questions as to caste; the condition of low-castes; and voyages by Hindus; the list was closed with the following pertinent question: "Is there any connection between spiritual greatness, and greatness in politics, commerce, literature and science; that is, does the latter depend on the former? As they are at present situated, which of the two countries —India or England—is spiritually superior? If the former is superior to the latter, how is it that Indian is inferior to England in politics, commerce, literature and science?"

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A month ago, one of the seven told us that as yet no replies had been received. Considering that the condition of its women is the test of a nation's civilization, we wonder at the silence.

In a recent London paper, in response to the question whether she was a Hindu or not, Mrs. Besant is represented as replying: that she was *almost* a vegetarian; and that when she lived in Benares, she lived as a Hindu, *excepting as regards certain laws and restrictions which apply to women!* What better reply to these questions do we need than this?

We hear a great deal nowadays, about "the spiritual supremacy of India," and "the gross materialism of western civilization." There has been a great stimulus in later years to the study of Sanskrit literature, partly due to the researches of English Oriental scholars and the translations they have made; and partly to the enthusiasm awakened by the return of Vevekanand from his visit to America and the parliament of religions. Every year new translations of the sacred books into English and the important vernaculars appear in an increasing ratio. There is also much talk of the glorious past of the Aryan age, and of a desire for a national religion.

Says a recent Hindu writer: "We do not un-

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derstand the claim of spiritual supremacy that is made on behalf of India. Mrs. Besant, with her usual assurance, proclaims on public platforms that India has been ordained to be the spiritual teacher of the whole world. Her teaching on this point is, that our mother-land was the religious *guru* of the world in the past, and if the present generation of Hindus will accept her teaching, and mould their actual lives by it, India will once again resume her old position. . . .

Was India a teacher of the world in the past? Was the *Adwaita* philosophy, on which Mrs. Besant's teaching rests, ever accepted by the *whole* of India? . . . From the history it has been possible to get out of the mass of Indian literature, *India was at no time an integral whole, either politically, it seems, or spiritually.*"

Another, an Indian writer, refers to this revival of the Hindu religion, and asks, "Is it not a fact that as the revivalist sentiment has spread wider in the land, a sort of anti-foreign feeling has also deepened?"

In spite of the absorbing subjects of the years which we have enumerated, which have filled to so large extent the public mind, and eclipsed the interest in the condition and position of women,

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there is still a root cause why the reformers are not more successful in their efforts. *They have no moral motive power.*

When one uses the word reformer, the mind instinctively turns to men like Wycliffe, Luther, the Huguenots, the sturdy Hollanders, the Pilgrim Fathers, Wilberforce, Garrison and others. Visions of flame come before us, enfolding in its fiery embrace, men like Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. The dictionary says a reformer is one who *effects* reform. How shall we define the word in its usage in India? It is often applied to all the educated class indiscriminately. A man may possess the highest culture, and yet be far from the ranks of the reformers. Some men are prepared to suffer a little for the cause of reform, but not too much. Until Indian reformers are willing to suffer even to the loss of all things; to order their own lives according to their convictions; to do right because it is right, regardless of consequences; we do not use the word in its legitimate sense. Some one has said, that India has never yet seen a real reformer.

An instance of the hollowness of some so-called reform is illustrated by the four reformatory methods enunciated a few years ago by a well-known Indian reformer in a public meeting:

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1. By the *Shastras*. When they agree with the reformers, quote them.
2. Interpretation. Interpret the *Shastras* so as to make them agree with you.
3. When interpretation fails, appeal to reason and conscience.
4. When that fails, ask for legislation.

We also have the anomaly of men who are M. A.'s and B. A.'s, some of whom have studied abroad and have also travelled in other countries, who are versed in all the modern questions of the day, and yet some of them have wives who have been mothers at twelve and thirteen, a wrong against which all present-day education and civilization must unceasingly protest. We knew of a government official, gentlemanly and popular, who drew a salary of five hundred rupees per month, yet when he died suddenly in the prime of life, he left a young widow of eighteen who had three children, the eldest being five years of age. We do not see how men can ever be happy or retain self-respect, who do not live up to their own convictions.

Again, we repeat, that we feel the reformers fail for the lack of a moral motive power which would give them a spirit of real sacrifice, true courage and perseverance, and make them examples of their teaching. A lack of conformity

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to our talk makes it useless. The Social Congress is accused of *only* passing resolutions. The highest moral influence that can be exerted by any being is through *example*. Advice, precept and sanction, all have moral power, but are only rendered operative by example. The world has this moral motive power manifested in the atonement of Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" for its redemption; and it is argued, "*Hereby* know we love, because He laid down His life for us; *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

The protest is often made that Europeans are not patient enough with the reformers, and do not understand their awful social difficulties and complications. We believe we do understand these sore difficulties; but we fear the reformers will never rise above them until they come into such relations with God as will enable them to meet the conditions laid down by Christ when He said: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me:" and "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, *but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.*"

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Nothing but the love of Christ gives men power to suffer for others, and compensates them for the loss of all things. This is the moral motive power that has made reformers and martyrs in Christian lands, and without which the reformers will never accomplish any thorough or lasting amendment in India.

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XVI

WHAT THE MISSIONARIES HAVE DONE

THERE is a tradition that the apostle Thomas first brought the gospel to India. There are three places in the neighborhood of Madras that claim his grave. The Syrian church on the Malabar coast numbering four hundred thousand, claim to be the descendants of his converts and of the Syrian colonists who joined them. They stoutly cling to that tradition, and are often called the Christians of St. Thomas. If this tradition be true, then the movement that formed the Syrian church, or in other words, Christianity in India, is older than Christianity in England. Rev. George Rae, in his book, refutes this claim, and asserts that the Syrian church is an offshoot of the Nestorian church in Persia, whose missionaries came to India in the fifth century; thus making the Syrian church fourteen centuries old; and the missionary, Thomas, who is said to have suffered martyrdom at St. Thomas, a suburb of Madras, lived several centuries after the apostle.

About 70 A. D., there was a sea-trade established between Egypt and the Southwest coast of India,

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famed for its spices. At this time, the rulers of the several independent states of South India wisely encouraged the settlers who came to them and enriched them in many ways. Some Indian merchants, probably Jews, who went to Alexandria in Egypt to sell their spices and gems, found there something far more valuable —"the pearl of great price." They became acquainted with the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. A petition was addressed to the Bishop of Alexandria, about 180 A. D., for a Christian teacher to be sent to India, and he wisely selected Pantænus for such an important field. How long he was in India, or how far inland he travelled, or when he returned to Egypt, is not known. He found among the Christians the Hebrew gospel of Matthew which formed the basis of the present Greek gospel. About a century later, Theopolis, surnamed Indicus, visited India, where he found Christianity already planted in several places.

The year 1500 has been fixed upon as the date of the founding of the Roman Catholic Missions in India, along with the advent of the Portuguese. Vasco de Gama discovered the maritime route to India, landing in Calicut, May 20th, 1498; and within the next half century, the Portuguese had

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planted trading forts along the Northern coast of India. With them came the priests, but it was not till the arrival of Francis Xavier, in 1542, that anything was done beyond the limits of the Portuguese settlements. It was he who gave the great impulse to Roman Catholic Missions in India.

Akbar, the Mogul Emperor, ascended the throne in 1556. One of his wives is said to have been a Christian. The Jesuit missionaries went as far as Nephaul, which they entered in 1661. There are now Roman Catholic missionaries all over India. Their directory for 1894 gives the number of European (Catholic) missionaries in India as six hundred and nineteen, while the census of 1891 gives the whole number of Roman Catholics *of all races*, European and Indian, in the whole of India (by which we include the French and Portuguese possessions as well as British India) as 1,594,901.[1]

The beginning of Protestant missions in India came from the heart of the good king of Denmark, who sent two young Germans, Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, to the Danish settlement at Tranquebar, on the southeast coast, in 1705. In 1750

[1] The author is greatly indebted for these statements to Dr. Murdoch's *History of Christianity in India*.

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these brethren were followed by Schwartz, one of the most useful men that ever came to India. "From the baptism of the first convert in 1707," says Smith, "and the translation of the New Testament into Tamil, till the death of Schwartz in 1798, the foundations were laid around Tanjore, Madras and Tinnevelli of a native church that now numbers over a half million." These Danish missions were never permanent, but were later taken over by the English agencies. They were a John the Baptist movement, "a voice in the wilderness," that preceded the establishment of our modern missions of the nineteenth century.

During the last year of Schwartz's life, God was preparing another missionary who was destined to begin a new era in the history of mission effort, not only in India, but in all lands. This was William Carey, the founder of modern missions. As he sat in his work shop and made and mended shoes, he studied a rude map of his own making on the wall, and thought and prayed how the heathen nations of the earth might be reached.

How little he dreamed of the way in which his prayers would be answered! The East India Company was singularly hostile to missionary

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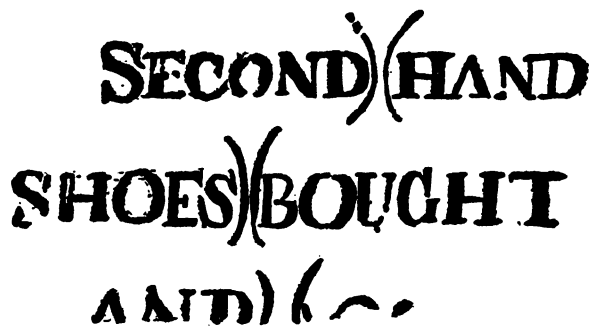
effort, and claimed that their preaching would create a rebellion, so that Carey, when he arrived in 1793, had to take refuge under the Danish flag at Serampore, thirteen miles north of Calcutta. Some missionaries were not even allowed to land. Wilberforce, at the renewal of the company's charter in 1793, tried to insert a clause



that would make such despotic proceedings impossible, but he did not succeed till its renewal in 1813, and then in spite of great opposition. "But it was not till 1833," says Bishop Thoburn, "that the last restrictions were removed, and every Christian missionary in the empire was clothed with the freedom which is now enjoyed by all persons bearing the Christian name."

Carey was a sort of John Knox to the officials of the East India Company, and he did much to

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purify English life in India; while his letters, his appeals, his writings, his work and his life, were the seed whose fruitage we now behold, and for which we praise God. With him the English Baptist Society has the honor of being the first to enter India. This was in 1793. The English Congregationalists, or London Missionary Society came in 1798; the Church Missionary Society in 1807; the American Board in 1812; the American Baptists and English Methodists in 1814; the Scotch Presbyterians in 1830; the American Presbyterians in 1834; the Irish Presbyterians in 1841; the American Methodists in 1856; and from year to year other societies have entered, the largest societies of later years being the Christians and Missionary Alliance in 1892; the Kurku and Central Indian Hill Mission in 1892; the Ceylon and Indian General Mission in 1893; and the Poona and Indian Village Mission in 1895; in all over seventy societies and associations. There are 2,797 missionaries, and at a census in 1890 there were 648,843 Protestant Indian Christians, and if they increase at the ratio they did the last decade, fifty-two per cent.; in 1900 there will be over 1,000,000 of Protestant Indian Christians.

In view of all this, we may well ask, what

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have the missionaries done for the women of India?

1. Through the representations of Carey and his fellow-workers, the custom of throwing children into the Ganges forever ceased.

2. The abolition of the *Suttee.* Early in his missionary life, Carey witnessed the burning of a widow. He begged the woman not to throw away her life. "After remonstrances," says his biographer, "which the people met first by argument, and then by surly threats, Carey wrote: 'I told them I would not go, that I was determined to stay and see the murder, and that I would certainly bear witness of it at the tribunal of God.' And when he again sought to interfere because the two stout bamboos always fixed for the purpose of preventing the woman's escape were pressed down on the shrieking woman like levers, he adds, 'We could not bear to see more, but left them, exclaiming loudly against the murder, and full of horror at what we had seen.' The remembrance of that sight never left Carey. His naturally cheerful spirit was inflamed to indignation all his life through, *till his influence, more than that of any other one man, at last prevailed to put out forever the flames of the murderous pyre.*"

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He and his fellow-workers spared no labor. They enlightened the minds of the English and Indian public on the subject; statistics were carefully gathered; with the help of his pundit he searched the Hindu shastras, and the results of his researches were laid before the government, and the recent enactment prohibiting the sacrifice of children was quoted as a precedent for further reform. Had Lord Wellesley remained Governor-General a year longer, Carey would have succeeded in 1808. But he had to wait twenty long years, and as "he waited and prayed, every day saw the devilish smoke ascending along the banks of the Ganges." In 1829, when Lord Bentinck's prohibition was ready to be published among the people, the crown of all Carey's efforts was the privilege of translating it into Bengali. He is said to have been preparing his Sunday sermon for the afternoon when it was handed to him. He sent for another to do his preaching, and taking his pen in his hand, wrote the official translation, and had it issued in the *Bengali Gazette*, that not another day might be added to the long black catalogue of many centuries.

3. During the agitation over the Bill for raising the Age of Consent, the awful case of Phulmani Dasi occurred at Calcutta. An American

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medical missionary, Mrs. Mansell, seized the opportunity, got up a petition to government in which were cited a number of similar and almost equally awful cases that had come under the notice of different lady practitioners, and this petition was signed by nearly all the lady doctors in India, the majority of whom were missionaries, with the result that it greatly aided in forming public opinion, and helped to win the day.

4. Missionaries, from the beginning, have greatly moulded public opinion upon all phases of the treatment of women; and perhaps eternity alone will reveal the influence that the home-life and the lives of lady missionaries have had in this respect.

5. Missionaries have been the pioneers and the chief promoters of education for women in India. This fact is generously and unreservedly conceded by government and all Indians. To Mrs. Hannah Marshman belongs the honor of having started the first effort. She established a day-school for girls in 1807. In 1819, a company of young Eurasians who had been educated by the Baptist missionary ladies, formed a society for the education of Indian women; and in three years they had six schools and one hundred and sixty pupils. What became of this juvenile so-

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ciety we do not know; but we believe it to have been an earnest of what God meant to have done through this race for India.

In 1818, the Calcutta School Society was started, and was composed of both Europeans and Indians. They were appalled at the fact that, among the 40,000,000 women that then constituted British India, only about one woman in 100,000 could read; and, in 1819, they appealed to the London British and Foreign School Society to send out a lady to form a school for training female teachers for further effort. William Ward of Serampore was at home when the appeal reached London, and added his influence to it. A Miss Cooke heard him make an appeal to the ladies of Liverpool, and volunteered for the work, reaching Calcutta in 1821. Her work was changed and precipitated very soon after her arrival by a touching incident.

On January 25th, 1822, as she was going to one of the boys' schools to improve her pronunciation, she saw a little girl outside the schoolroom crying. On inquiry, she found that the child had for three months besieged the master with her desire to be taught, only to be driven away. This so moved Miss Cooke that, the next day, she started a girls' school. The work

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spread rapidly, until in 1825, thirty schools had been formed with four hundred pupils. Both Lady Hastings, the wife of the Governor-General at that time, and her successor, Lady Amherst, took the deepest interest in these schools. It is said that the Marchioness of Hastings, in her zeal, traversed the gullies and back streets of the city in which some of the schools were situated, and thereby produced a great impression on all classes.

At this time, 1825, the wives of the American Board missionaries in Bombay opened a similar work; and, four years later, they were followed by Mrs. Stevenson and Mrs. Margaret Wilson. Because the Mahratta people are not hampered by the zenana, and the Parsees by caste, the work here, for a time, seemed to make greater strides than elsewhere, and was an encouragement to other parts of India.

In the different presidencies, too, boarding-schools for Indian Christian girls were started; also orphanages, which are continually multiplied over India by the periodical famines that occur, and orphan and render homeless thousands of children.

But to return to Calcutta. The day-schools for Hindu girls had only touched the lower castes. How were the upper-class ladies hidden behind

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the *purdah* in the zenanas ever to be reached, was the constant burden on many hearts. In 1840, Mr. T. Smith of the Free Church Mission, proposed a scheme for the home education of women of the upper classes, but at that time it met with no practical response. In 1850, Hon. Drinkwater Bethune, a member of the Legislative Council, opened the Bethune Institution at his own expense; provided a closed carriage to bring the girls to and from their homes to the school; paid for a lady superintendent; promised that no Christianity should be taught; and hoped by this to reach many of this class. For many years it was not very prosperous, and could not have been. Here and there, in isolated instances, missionary ladies taught the families of the more liberal-minded men. Some of them taught their own families; English education began to spread; and interesting incidents were constantly occurring that added momentum to the slowly accumulating public opinion on the subject.

Soon after the establishment of the Bethune Institution a thrilling event occurred: "The highly educated son of an influential Hindu gentleman had privately instructed his gifted young wife, with whom he read, among other books,

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the English Bible. He was under promise to his mother never to become a Christian: but he read the Scriptures because they were interesting as an historical study. The entrance of the Word gave light to the heart of the young wife, and she besought her husband to accept Christ as his Saviour. A widowed cousin of fourteen read with them, and she also believed, but the husband resisted. The young wife grieved and died—died trusting in Jesus for salvation,—the husband's heart yielded and he and the cousin were baptized. These conversions made a deep impression on Christian hearts, and, combined with other circumstances, led to effective effort which took the form of founding an institution for training the daughters of Eurasian parents born in India and familiar with the language. It was believed that such teachers for Hindu ladies would ere long be needed, though at that time they were still inaccessible." [1] In 1852 the Calcutta Normal School was established.

In 1854, Rev. John Fordyce, of the Free Church Mission, enthusiastically took up a scheme for zenana education. He persuaded two or three Hindu gentlemen to open their houses to, and to pay for, the instructions of his ablest teacher,

[1] *The Women of India*, by Mrs. Weitbrecht.

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a European governess who knew Bengali perfectly. He also printed "a series of fly-leaves which were widely circulated throughout India. They contained short, strong and striking appeals to Hindu husbands and fathers, and produced an impression which deepened year by year; so that, at first one by one, and afterward in increasing ratio, zenana doors flew open until the question became, how to supply laborers, instead of how to get in."[1] Mrs. Sale, Mrs. Mullens and other devoted ladies developed the scheme by their special fitness for it.

In 1861, "The India Normal School and Instruction Society" was formed in London, to coöperate with the ladies in Calcutta; and in 1862 sent out its first zenana missionary. In the same year Miss Brittian came from New York to Calcutta, the representative of the Women's Missionary Union, an undenominational Ladies' Society for work among women. "In ten years she reported eight hundred women under the instruction of the missionaries of that society, while nearly seventeen hundred were being taught by missionary ladies of other societies."[2]

[1] *The Women of India*, by Mrs. Weitbrecht.
[2] *The Orient and its People*, by Mrs. Hauser.

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The result has been truly phenomenal. In a quarter of a century from that day, nearly all the Woman's Boards and Societies especially engaged in work for women were formed, and zenana instruction became a part of the work of almost every mission. Dr. Duff's constant theory had always been that a generation of educated men, that is educated after the English model, must be the precursor of a generation of educated women, "and," says his biographer, "even 1850 was the day of small things in girls', as 1830 had been in boys' education in Bengal, but the boys of 1830 had become the fathers of 1850, and made the time ripe for advance."

In 1830 Dr. Duff opened an institution in Calcutta, in which English was taught instead of Sanskrit and Arabic, as in the government colleges. Lord Macaulay, then in India, adopted Dr. Duff's views and did much to put education in India on its present basis.

The despatch of Sir Charles Wood, in 1854, marks an important epoch in Indian education. Complete Educational Departments were to be organized, and a national system to be commenced. In 1857, the Universities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were founded; to which the Punjab University was added in 1882, and

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the Allahabad University in 1887. These are simply examining bodies.

A network of schools has been extended over the whole country, rising gradually from indigenous schools to the highest colleges. Missionaries were the inspiration to government for establishing girls' schools, as well as to Indian effort.

Miss Carpenter first visited India in 1866, and urged government to open training schools for the training of mistresses for girls' schools. This they did, but they were not all a success. She also originated the National Indian Association which seeks to foster and help private efforts for female education as one of its objects. The Parsees control their own schools for their girls. They have seven high schools in Bombay. There are only two or three B. A.'s among them, and about a dozen lady graduates from medical colleges. About seventy-seven per cent. of the girls can read.

As an evangelizing agency, we feel that the high hopes of Dr. Duff and the promoters of zenana education have never been realized; and that, sooner or later, education will pass into the hands of government and the Hindus themselves, and missionaries will largely confine their

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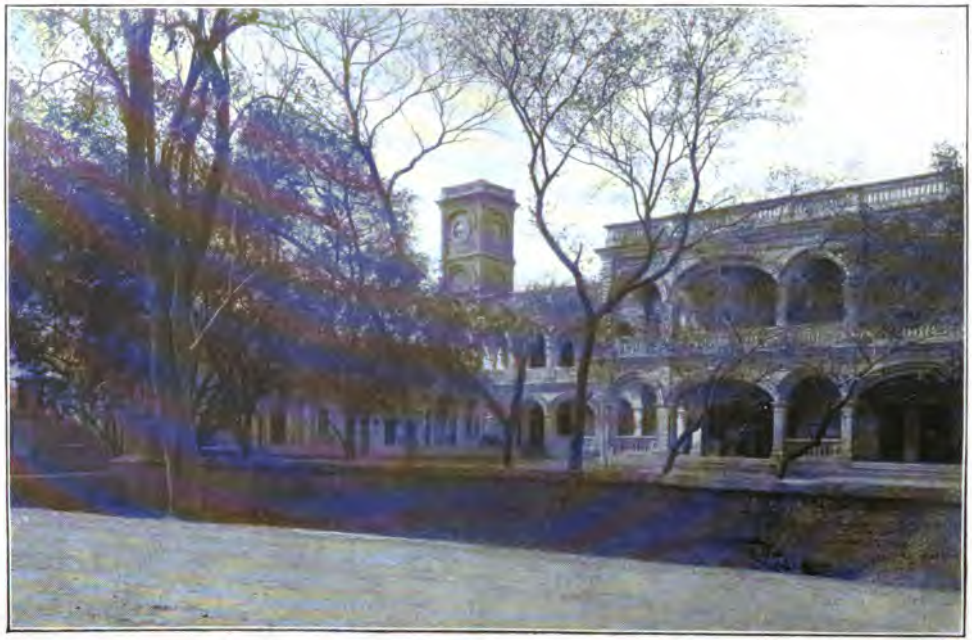

LUCKNOW COLLEGE

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efforts to the education and training of the ever increasing number of Christian young men and women, though such non-Christians as prefer a Christian school will not be refused.

It would require a separate volume to write the history of female education in India as it should be written. We must omit much that is deeply interesting, skip over many years, and give a peep at the present situation. It is needless to say that the Christians, though the fifth race in India, have led the way in all matters of female education; and the Parsees, the smallest of the Indian races, come next.

There are two Christian Colleges for women in India, the Lucknow College in North India, an institution of the American Methodist Mission; and the Sarah Tucker College in Palamcottah, South India, under the Church Missionary Society. There are a number of high schools with college classes. Of the Lucknow College, Miss Thoburn its founder and principal, says: "There were, here and there, Christians in good circumstances whose sons were studying in high schools and colleges, reading and talking English, and living in touch with the new life of the empire. They asked for a school where their daughters might have like opportunities. Some

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of them lived in remote places, hence a boarding school was necessary. They were not rich, but had money enough to pay boarding fees and all incidental expenses. We opened the school for such children. The mission, with a grant from government, has paid for teachers and buildings." This school is ideal in that it has received all pupils sent without regard to race or language; and has combined in one happy family, Hindustani, Bengali, English and Eurasian girls; while all are trained to work for Christ. This school is affiliated with the Allahabad University, and the Sarah Tucker with the Madras University.

The Bethune Institution, formed in 1850, became in 1879 Bethune College, and is affiliated with the Calcutta University in Arts up to the B. A. standard; and is the only fully equipped college in Bengal for the higher education of women. Its principal is Miss Chandra Bose, an Indian Christian lady, a B. A. and M. A. It is not a religious but a government institution, and the number of students average from twenty-five to thirty girls. There are two lady graduates on the staff of teachers, in charge of such subjects as English literature, mental and moral science, ancient and modern history, and bot-

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any. It has not been possible yet to carry on the work without the coöperation of gentlemen lecturers. Twenty young ladies have graduated from the college with the degree of B. A., three of whom have taken the degree of M. A. from the Calcutta University, and two from the Allahabad University. Forty-three passed the first examination in arts. Of all these young ladies, none are Mohammedan; about one-half being Bengali Christians, and the other half Hindu girls of the Brahmo Somaj.

Then there is the Maharajah's College for girls in Travandum, in the native state of Travancore. There are many excellent high schools throughout the country. The majority are missionary institutions. A few were started by government, and a number are private enterprises. A number of these high schools have college classes, and may, at no distant day, blossom into full-blown colleges. To some of these, like the Dehra Dun High School, (American Presbyterian Mission) which has had a career of forty years, and the Ahmednagar High School (American Board Mission) and others, we are indebted for some of our best Christian women.

The most unique Hindu school that we know of, is the Maharani's Caste girls' school in

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Mysore (a native state). It has at present an ex-missionary lady as principal. Four Brahman girls from it have passed the entrance examination of the Madras University. It is a high school, and is steadily working up into a college, having this year a college class of two girls ; but caste and early marriage will no doubt be for some time yet a great hindrance. This school closed last year with an enrollment of three hundred and eighty-six students. Of these, thirty-two were widows, besides eight widow teachers —all Brahmans! The majority of the girls above the fourth class are mothers, as are almost all the widows. In fact almost all the girls, except the infant classes, are married. The school edits a paper in Canarese and English. The school is of purely Indian enterprise and management, and a more interesting school, considering the social conditions of India, it would be difficult to find.

Then there is the Victoria High School in Poona, the founder and principal being an Indian Christian lady—Mrs. Sorabjee. It is an English school that receives all races, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees, Jews and English; and has been a great success. Ramabai's High School for widows, and her farm school for her orphan

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widows, are too well known to need comment. Miss Chakarbulty, another Indian Christian lady, has an orphanage in Allahabad gathered out of the late famine, for the entire support of which she depends upon her trust in God.

We must not omit to mention the American Board High School for Christian children in Bombay, which was the first attempt at coëducation on a large scale ever made in India. Here and there is an Indian Christian girl, or a Hindu or Parsee girl, who is brave enough to present herself at the doors of some young men's college, and to finish her course of study in it; the forerunners of a great movement in that direction. Besides these schools are thousands of primary schools. The few are in the upper schools, the many in the primary. Great difficulties have yet to be continually dealt with, either in the apathy or the opposition of the people, in caste, and in child marriage, which causes most girls to leave school at ten or twelve years of age; and with the majority of these their education ends there.

The Indian universities—all honor to them,—were in advance of those of England in opening examinations and degrees to women. An Indian Christian girl, Miss Chandra Bose was the first to

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appear, and passed her entrance examination in 1876. Sixteen years afterward, four hundred and seventy girls had followed her. Up to 1899, in the Madras presidency alone, two young ladies have passed the B. A. examination, and both are Indian Christians; twenty-five have passed the F. A. examination, of whom twenty are Europeans and Eurasians, and five are Indian Christians; three hundred and nine have passed the matriculation (entrance) examination, of whom one is a Mohammedan, four are Brahmans, six are Parsees, seventy-one are Indian Christians, and two hundred and twenty-seven Europeans and Eurasians.

We praise God for all the progress that has been made, but a few simple figures from the educational report of 1897–98 show, after all, how slowly we have gone, and how much land there is yet to be possessed. Only six women in one thousand in all India can read, or 0.6 per cent.

6. But the greatest work that has been wrought by the missionaries for women, and without which they would count all the rest as naught, has been that they have brought thousands of India's women to know Christ as their Saviour; a work that will abide through all eternity, and

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for which many have gladly laid down their lives.[1]

[1] By tables sent in from the different universities, (and they were not all tabulated quite alike), we find that since the universities have opened their examinations to women, up to 1899, one thousand three hundred and six women have passed the matriculation or entrance examination. Of these about three hundred and sixty-seven are native Christians, twenty-seven Hindus, one Mohammedan, seven hundred and twenty-eight European or Eurasian; the remainder being divided between other nationalities; and thirty-eight are returned as having passed the B. A. examination.

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XVII

THE REAL DIFFICULTY

THE keys to the wrongs of Indian women are Mohammedanism and Hinduism. What we have roughly outlined in preceding chapters, is the best that Mohammedanism and Hinduism can do for women. As long as the *Koran* is obeyed, the *zenana* and polygamy will continue to exist among Mohammedans. The former is commanded by the prophet, and the latter permitted; for a Mohammedan can have four wives at one time, and yet obey the *Koran* and be a pious Mussulman. It has even been contended by some writers that the *Koran* allows no place in heaven for women. This is not the case, but, says Muir, "the condition fixed by Mahomet for women is that of a dependent, inferior creature, destined only for the service of her lord, and liable to be cast off without the assignment of any reason." But arbitrary divorce is not the only privilege (?) man has. In *Sura* IV. it is written: "*Men stand above women, because of the superiority which God hath conferred on one of them over the other,* and because of that which they expend of their

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wealth. Therefore let the good women be obedient, preserving their purity in secret in that wherein God preserveth them. But such as ye may fear disobedience (or provocation) from, rebuke them, *and put them away in separate apartments and chastise (or beat) them.* But if they be obedient unto you, seek not against them an excuse (or severity): verily God is lofty and great."

The tenet of Hinduism, that if a woman pleases her husband she pleases the gods ; seems also to prevail to some extent among Mohammedans.

A personal friend well illustrates this with the following story of a conversation she held with a Mohammedan widow: "Our conversation led to the inequalities between men and women, especially among the Mohammedans. The widow said it was a woman's chief business to please her husband, even if he were a bad man; and that by so doing, she would please God. Then she told me the following story: 'A woman was seen sitting half in the sun and half in the shade, while by her side were some broken bricks, a stick and a rope, and some cold and hot water in different vessels. Some one, (Mahomet's daughter, we think), asked her why she was sitting half in the shade, and half in the sun. She an-

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swered that her husband was a grass-cutter and she could not tell whether in cutting his grass he was at that time in the sun or in the shade, but whichever it was, she wanted to sympathize with him, and so felt both heat and cold at the same time. She also added in explanation that she did not know which he would prefer on his return hot or cold water, so she had both ready. Also if he were in a bad temper, and wished to beat her, he would choose between the stick and the rope, or throw the pieces of brick at her.' The prophet hearing this, replied that she was truly a good woman, and deserved to go to heaven."

On the other hand, Hinduism, which is the greater oppressor of women of the two religions, is the great interpreter of these wrongs. "The *Vedas* are believed by the devout Hindus to be the eternal, self-existing word of God, revealed by Him to the different sages. Besides the *Vedas* there are more than twenty-five books of sacred law, ascribed to different authors, who wrote or compiled them at various times, and on which are based the principal customs and religious institutes of the Hindus. Among these, the code of Manu ranks highest, and is held by all to be very sacred, second to none but the *Vedas* themselves. Although Manu and the different law-

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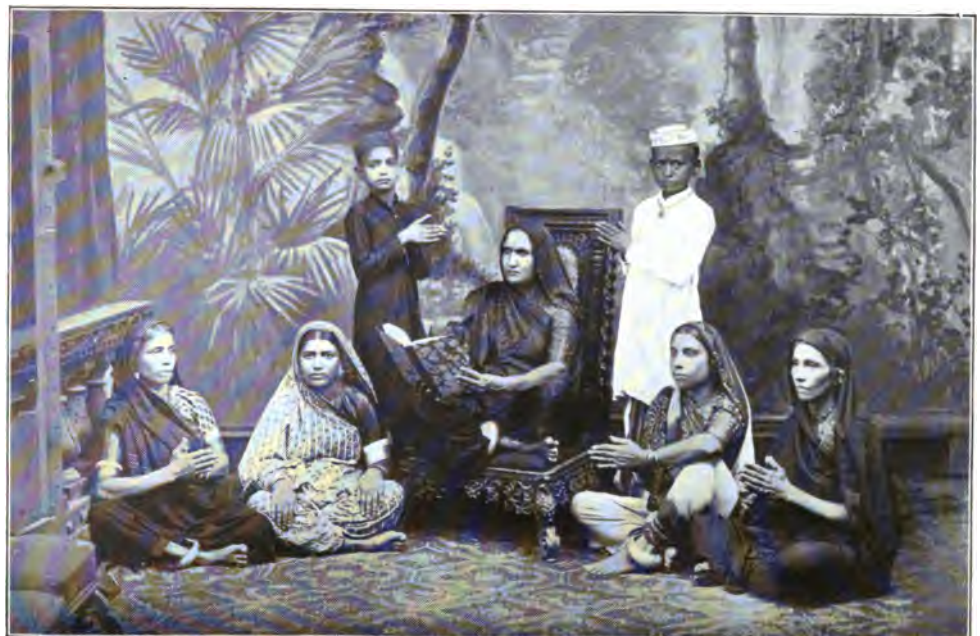

READING OF THE SHASTRAS

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givers differ greatly on many points, *they all agree on things concerning women.*" [1]

Says Dr. Wilson: "Much of the favor shown to women by the Hindu *shastras*—when, indeed, they do show her favor—is founded on the low idea that she is the property of man, as his ox or his ass. It is on this understanding, and that she may bear to him a son, without whom, natural or adopted, he can have no salvation; that her life is to be preserved; and that she is to have that degree of comfort which may be allotted to her. Her general debasement, according to the Hindu *shastras*, is extreme."

Ramabai confirms this by saying: "The wife is declared to be the 'marital property' of her husband, and is classed with 'cows, mares, female camels, slave-girls, buffalo-cows, she-goats and ewes." (See Manu ix. 48–51.) But she adds, in regard to the favorable passages: "These commandments are significant. Our Aryan Hindus did, and still do honor women to a certain extent. Although the woman is looked upon as an inferior being, she is the queen of her son's household, wields great power there, and is generally obeyed as the head of the family by her sons, and her daughters-in-law."

[1] *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, by Ramabai.

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Says Dr. Wilson again: "Of the original constitution of woman, as distinguished from that of man, the Hindu sages and legislators, the authors of the Hindu sacred books, have thus written: 'Falsehood, cruelty, bewitchery, folly, covetousness, impurity, and unmercifulness are woman's inseparable faults.' 'Woman's sin is greater than that of man,' and cannot be removed by the atonements which destroy his; 'women are they who have an aversion to good works;' 'women have hunger twofold more than men; intelligence (cunning) fourfold; violence, sixfold; and evil desires, eightfold.' 'Through their evil desires, their want of settled affection, and their perverse nature, let them be guarded in this world ever so well; they soon become alienated from their husbands. Manu allotted to such women a love of their bed, of their seat, and of ornaments, impure appetites, wrath, weak flexibility, desire of mischief and bad conduct. Women have no business with the text of the *Vedas*. This is the law fully settled. Having therefore no evidence of law, and no knowledge of expiatory texts, sinful women must be as foul as falsehood itself, and this is a fixed rule. To this effect, many texts which may show their true disposition are chanted in the *Vedas*.' (Manu ix.

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18, 19.) It will be observed that it is the *sex*, and not the *race*, that is here condemned. The idea that woman is a help-meet for man, seems never to have entered into the minds of the Hindu sages. They uniformly treat her as a necessary evil, and a most dangerous character. Her position, according to them, is that of a continuous slavery and dependence. 'They enjoin that by a girl, or by a young woman, or by a woman advanced in years, nothing must be done, even in her own dwelling-place, according to her mere pleasure; in childhood a female must be dependent on (or subject to) her father; in youth, on her husband: her lord being dead, on her sons: a woman must never seek independence.' (Manu v. 158.)

"The Hindu *shastras* have made no provisions of affection and regard for a daughter. She is viewed by them, as far as her parents are concerned, merely as an object to be *'given away,'* and that as soon as possible. She is declared by them to be marriageable, even in her infancy, to a person of any age; and of course without her own choice, or intelligent consent. . . . According to the letter of the law, the parents are not to sell their daughters, but they may receive valuable gifts, the equivalent of a price, on her behalf. (Manu iii. 51.)

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"The Hindu wife is placed under the absolute will of her lord, without any reference to moral distinctions: and even in religious matters, he intervenes between her conscience and her God. 'A husband,' says Manu, 'must constantly be revered as a god by a virtuous wife. No sacrifice is allowed to women apart from their husbands, no religious rite, no fasting; *as far only as a wife honors her lord, so far is she exalted in heaven.*' (Manu v. 155.) 'Let a wife,' it is said in the *Skanda Purana*, 'who wishes to perform sacred ablution, wash the feet of her lord, and drink the water: *for a husband is to a wife greater than Shankar or Vishnu. The husband is her god, and priest, and religion: wherefore abandoning everything else, she ought chiefly to worship her husband.*'

"The husband is actually cautioned against allowing his affections to rest upon her in the degree that is lawful in the case of others of his kindred. 'Let not a woman be much loved,' it is enjoined: 'let her have only that degree of affection that is necessary. Let the fullness of affection be reserved for brothers, and other similar connections.' When kindness to the woman is urged, it is recommended principally as calculated to promote the husband's benefit. (*See*

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the case of her ornaments, Manu iii. 61.) A rope and a rod are expressly mentioned as the ordinary supports of a husband's authority. On trivial grounds, even for an unkind word, she may be superseded, or divorced. For polygamy and licentiousness on the part of the husband, there can be pleaded, not only certain laxities of legislation, according to which they appear as matters comparatively trivial; *but even the alleged examples of the gods themselves!*"[1]

Abbe Duboise in his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, devotes a chapter to rules of conduct by which these general principles we have quoted from the Hindu *shastras* are worked out in detail.

These rules are taken from the *Padma-Purana*, one of their most valued books, and are translated literally:

"Give ear to me attentively, great king of Dilipa! I will expound to thee how a wife attached to her husband and devoted to her duties ought to behave.

"There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works that she can do, is to seek to please

[1] *Suppression of Infanticide in Western India*, by John Wilson, D. D., F. R. S.

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him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. Therein should lie her sole rule of life.

"Be her husband deformed, aged, infirm, offensive in his manners; let him also be choleric, debauched, immoral, a drunkard, a gambler: let him frequent places of ill-repute, live in open sin with other women, have no affection whatever for his home; let him rave like a lunatic; let him live without honor; let him be blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled; in a word let his defects be what they may, let his wickedness be what it may, a wife should always look upon him as her god, should lavish on him all her attention and care; paying no heed whatever to his character, and giving him no cause whatsoever for displeasure.

"Should she see anything which she is desirous of possessing, she must not seek to acquire it without the consent of her husband. If her husband receives the visit of a stranger, she shall retire with bent head and shall continue her work without paying the least attention to him. She must concentrate her thoughts on her husband only, and must never look another man in the face. *In acting thus, she wins the praise of everybody.*

"If her husband laugh, she must laugh; if he

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be sad, she must be sad; if he weeps, she must weep; if he asks questions, she must answer. Thus will she give proof of her good disposition.

"She must take heed not to remark that another man is young, handsome, or well proportioned; and, above all, she must not speak to him. Such modest demeanor will secure for her the reputation of a faithful spouse.

"It shall even be the same with her who, seeing before her the most beautiful gods, shall regard them disdainfully and as though they were not worthy of comparison with her husband.

"A wife must eat only after her husband has had his fill. If the latter fast, she shall fast too; if he touch not food, she also shall not touch it; if he be in affliction, she shall be so too; if he be cheerful, she shall share his joy. A good wife should be less devoted to her sons, or to her grandsons, or to her jewels, than to her husband. She must, on the death of her husband, allow herself to be burned alive on the same funeral pyre; then everybody will praise her virtue.

"She cannot lavish too much affection on her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, and her husband; and should she perceive that they are squandering all the family substance in extrava-

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gance, she would be wrong to complain, and still more wrong to oppose them.

"Before her husband, let her words fall softly and sweetly from her mouth; *and let her devote herself to pleasing him every day more and more.*

"If a husband keep two wives, the one should not amuse herself at the expense of the other, be it for good, or for evil; neither should the one talk about the beauty or the ugliness of the children of the other. They must live on good terms, and must avoid addressing unpleasant and offensive remarks to each other.

"Let her carefully avoid creating domestic squabbles on the subject of her parents, *or on account of another woman whom her husband may wish to keep,* or on account of any unpleasant remark which may have been addressed to her. *To leave the house for reasons such as these, would expose her to public ridicule, and would give cause for much evil-speaking.*

"If her husband flies into a passion, threatens her, abuses her grossly, even beats her unjustly, she shall answer him meekly, shall lay hold of his hands, kiss them, and beg his pardon, instead of uttering loud cries, and running away from the house.

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"*Let all her words and actions give public proof that she looks upon her husband as her god.* Honored by everybody, she shall thus enjoy the reputation of a faithful and virtuous spouse."

It is the Hindu religious belief that a woman must never forsake her husband, but submit to him in all things, that makes her afraid and ashamed to leave his house for brutal treatment, or even if he brings a mistress into the house with her. It is this belief that would make all society hound her if she did. In the accounts of the lives of some of the gods there is sanction for nautch-girls and *devadasis.* This keeps the public from being shocked at the custom. It is to the worship of Krishna, that much of the immorality of the country can be blamed. The custom of temple girls flourishes most extensively and almost exclusively in Vishnu or Krishna temples.

As long as these beliefs exist, and the customs that have grown up around them, so long will these wrongs of Indian women remain in the land; for not only is her own salvation secured by the observance of these customs and rights; but that of numberless relatives also.

In illustration of this, Sir Monier Williams tells

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of a certain pious ascetic who determined to shirk the religious duty of taking a wife. Wandering about in the woods, absorbed in meditation, he saw before him a deep and apparently bottomless pit, around whose edges "some men were hanging suspended by ropes of grass at which, here and there, a rat was nibbling. On asking their history, he discovered, to his horror, that they were his own ancestors compelled to hang in this manner, and doomed eventually to fall into the abyss, unless he went back, into the world, did his duty like a man, married a suitable wife, and had a son who would be able to release them from their critical predicament."

As long as men and women remain devout Hindus, so long will this estimate of women pervade society. By devout, we mean sincere. We would dread the day that the women should break away from their devoutness and sincerity, and become "reformed" in outward things, at the expense of becoming sceptics, atheists, insincere and hypocritical in keeping up a form of Hinduism. We have more hope of a man, who is sincere, even if mistaken, than of a hypocrite. The thing is to teach the woman that her husband's salvation is not secured by the birth of a son; that her own and each relative's salvation

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depends on personal obedience to God; that widowhood is not the result of her sin; that a husband is not as a god; that by obedience to him in life, heaven is not secured to her; that a life of penance and austerity after his death, does not secure her own or his eternal happiness. Give her true ideas of salvation, if you want her to find and to fill her true place.

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XVIII

THE REAL REMEDY

In previous chapters we have canvassed the subject of the hope of help from government and the reformers, the two sources to which many look for the redemption of Indian women. But we confess the outlook from either source is not very bright at present. Government, under the most propitious circumstances has been slow in making changes, much less is it likely to do so now in the presence of its present absorbing questions, and in the face of the present discontent and strong race feeling.

And the reformers? To many, the disappointment from this source has been most bitter. We give credit for all that has been done, but so much that we had a right to demand from educated India has never been accomplished. Hon. Justice Scott, of the Bombay High Court, well said in a letter to Mr. Malabari: "If you wait till individual Hindus take up and carry through, single handed, without any outside aid, any great change in their social system, you will realize the fable of the countryman, who sat by the

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A HIGH CASTE GIRL

A LOW CASTE WOMAN

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river bank and waited for the stream to run dry before he crossed over to the other side. It is not in human nature to expect that great changes will be affected in a society by its own members, when the advocates of change have to face family estrangement, social ostracism, and caste excommunication, as a probable result of their efforts." Caste, which holds the whole fabric of Hinduism together, has been too much for them. They will denounce it and yet obey its demands, at least to an extent sufficient to enable them to keep within its sacred precincts socially.

Even Ram Mohun Roy, who has stood the highest in the ranks of Indian reformers, "in the eyes of the law always remained a Brahman. He never abandoned the Brahmanical thread, and had too lively a sense of the value of money, to risk the forfeiture of his property and the consequent diminution of his usefulness and influence by formally giving up his caste. In fact, though far in advance of his age as a thinker, he laid no claim to perfect disinterestedness of motive as a man. . . . He died a Hindu in respect of external observances; his Brahman servant performed the usual rites required by his master's caste, and his Brahmanical thread was found coiled round his person when his spirit

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passed away. *In all his Anti-Brahmanism, he continued a Brahman to the end.* Even after his death it was thought advisable to keep up the fiction of a due maintenance of caste." [1] His body was not interred in a Christian burial ground, though he died in Christian England, tenderly nursed to the end by Christian friends; but was buried in the private grounds of his hostess. And this will continue to be the history of reformers until they have a different motive power for effort, one that will enable them to suffer the loss of all things, and to receive that which will compensate and satisfy their hearts for what they lose.

And the women themselves, will they agitate their wrongs until they are righted? Until they, too, are given different ideas of religion, respectability and right, they will be the greatest opponents of reform on their behalf. Women are always most prominent in religious matters in every nation, and in India, *they* are the persons who cling so intensely to the old ways, customs and caste. No matter how deeply a young widow suffers in being shorn of her hair, it frequently happens that no one is harder than she,

[1] *Religious Thought and Life in India*, by Sir Monier Williams.

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as time goes on, on younger widows that they should follow in the same steps of suffering. A Brahman neighbor of ours had two widows in his family, who were of the most orthodox type. In the course of conversation with one of them one day, he kindly proposed that she should remarry. At the mere suggestion, notwithstanding all she had suffered, she burst into tears. She regarded it as an insult. It would not be respectable!

Many educated Hindus fear the women of the household almost more than aught else. Men who will declaim against child marriage, caste and enforced widowhood in public, have not courage when they go home to face the women of the household; for their tears and entreaties win the day.

We knew of one gentleman who lost his wife. Immediately his mother proposed marriage with a little girl. He pleaded to be allowed to remain single. But no, the mother persisted. Then he begged to be allowed to marry a woman nearer his own age, who, under the circumstances, would have to be a widow. At this all the female relations rose in a solid body against it. They were uneducated; they had never shared his thought of reform. Finally the mother

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threatened to commit suicide, a threat which she probably would have carried out, and the man yielded at a sacrifice of all his convictions, and of all his public utterances that had done so much good, and married the girl-wife.

Children are timid and shrinking, and some one has suggested that it is from *child* mothers, that Hindus inherit their lack of courage. Yes, Indian women have great influence, and know how to use it; but how often it is turned in the wrong direction. God meant that woman should have great influence. He meant that she should be man's help-meet and comforter. It was perhaps from the memory of such scenes as we have described, that, in speaking of the influence of women in the homes of India, as in other countries, Keshub Chundra Sen said, in a humorous way, in an address in England: "Woman has been defined as an adjective agreeing with the noun, man. I should rather say that man is a noun in the objective case governed by woman!"

Neither are the women of India inferior to the women of other lands. Given the same opportunity, they are the equals of any women. We have found many who had all the possibilities of

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the career of noble women, save that they were handicapped by ignorance and the disabilities under which they have lived. And such women are not confined only to the higher castes. We knew, for a number of years, a *sweeper* woman who would have been a most remarkable character had she had but half a chance. Unhappily her life was turned into evil channels, and yet her neighbors called her the "*Begum*" (a lady)! There are thousands of women all over the land who, were they not warped by iron custom, and handicapped by cruel public opinion, would, if given a purpose in life, leave their mark upon the Indian world.

Indian women are loving, affectionate and faithful; and, says the *Indian Witness*, "they are entitled to the greatest admiration for the wonderfully patient manner in which they accept their hard lot and make the best of their gloomy environments."

We are grateful for what has been accomplished in female education, and for the enlightened Hindu ladies we meet here and there; but the real emancipation of Indian women will never come, except through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is *the real remedy* for the wrongs of Indian womanhood; for this is what has elevated women

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in other lands, and is waiting to do the same for India.

Culture and civilization alone will never raise woman to her true position. Whatever of civilization at present that is worth anything in Christian nations is the outgrowth of the religion of Jesus Christ. The true elevation of women in these nations is due to this, and this alone. Peruse the pages of history and see if this is not true. What do we find to be the condition of women in any land outside of Christendom, either in the past or present?

Infanticide has prevailed, in some form or other, in almost every nation: "polygamy has prevailed over almost the whole expanse of Asia: throughout the vast empire of China, and in the greater part of India, female children are betrothed in childhood; in almost every pagan race, ancient or modern, females are given away in marriage without their own consent; in many lands they are bought and sold; divorce can in most cases be had on easy terms; not only the Brahman of India, but the Polynesian savage, and even the Negro slaves of the West Indies, will not allow their wives to eat with them; intellectual culture, when apart from the sanctifying influences of Christianity, has nowhere checked—has

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A GOSPEL WAGON

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rather precipitated—the derangement of the relation of the sexes to each other." [1]

What did the high civilization of Greece and Rome, and the philosophies there extant do for women? Says Dr. Murdoch: "When Christianity was first made known in Europe, the state of society in the most civilized nations was most corrupt. Adultery was a *fashionable* crime. . . . A single temple to the goddess Venus had a thousand prostitutes for its priestesses;" and he quotes another writer as saying, "The tender reverence for women is not mere product of culture and civilization, for it was unknown to Greece and Rome in the zenith of their refinement. . . . It is the reflection on earth of that self-devoting love that brought the Son of God from heaven." And, says the Rev. F. W. Robertson: "It was from that time forward that womanhood assumed a new place in the world, and steadily and gradually rose to a higher dignity in human life. It is not to mere civilization, but to the spirit of life in Christ, that woman owes all she is, and all she has yet to gain."

The religion of Jesus Christ is not so much a

[1] *The Influence of Christianity on the Position and Character of Women*, by Dr. Kay.

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system of doctrine, though this has its value, as it is a *life* that moulds and transforms the character of its believers. Says one: "It expelled cruelty; curbed passion; punished and repressed an execrable infanticide; drove the shameless impurities of heathendom into a congenial darkness; freed the slave; protected the captive; sheltered the orphan; shrouded as with a halo of sacred innocence the tender years of a child; elevated woman; sanctified marriage from little more than a burdensome convention into little less than a blessed sacrament;" and where men and women have received it, has made their hearts and lives so pure that it has given to men a reverence and chivalrous care for women; and on the other hand, has so hallowed the character of woman, as to make the words, "mother," "sister," "wife" and "daughter," the tenderest words in the language of men. It has taught the equality of woman with man, and made her his help-meet and comforter. It is a religion that offers salvation regardless of sex, and teaches that "in Christ there is neither male nor female." (Gal. iii. 28.) It makes woman a responsible moral being, whose salvation and possibilities of a holy life on earth, and her future eternal blessedness, depend on her own personal acceptance of Christ and obedience

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to Him, and not on her relations to her husband or any other relative.

Christianity does not subvert the relations of the household. It recognizes man as the head of the house, and asks obedience of the wife; while in the same breath it bids husbands "love their wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." It demands obedience of son and daughter to both father and *mother* alike; and hallows the entire home by making the relation of husband and wife as a type of Christ and the Church, and the relations of parents to their children, a faint shadow of the great Fatherhood of God. But in all these relations, the obedience of the wife to her husband, the love of the husband for the wife, or the submission of the children to the parents, are never to supersede love and obedience to God. This helps us to understand what it meant by the words: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. x. 37.)

This is one of the places where Hinduism breaks down, in that family caste relations are made to supersede obligations to God and their fellow-men. This is the rock upon which so

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many reformers make shipwreck. This is the cause of much unhappiness on the part of the educated Hindus who sacrifice their convictions to these considerations. This is the point where so many hundreds of men and women in India reject the gospel, which is the very hope not only of India's women, but of India herself.

India has had some wonderful proofs of what Christ can do for women in Ramabai, in her tireless love and self-denial for her Indian sisters; in the energetic Mrs. Sorabjee, with her Victoria High School; and in her accomplished daughter, Cornelia, the first lady graduate of the Deccan College, the first lady professor in an India College whose students were men, and the first lady law-student; in that earnest quartette of sisters, Sunderbai, Manjulabai, Shewantibai, and Jaiwantibai Power, in their evangelistic efforts for women; in Toru Dutt, the gentle poetess; in Krupabai Satthianadhan, the authoress; in Chandra Bose, the esteemed lady principal of the Bethune College; in Lilawanti Singh, the efficient teacher in the Lucknow College for women; in Lakshmi Goreh, the sweet hymn-writer; in Dr. Gurubai Karmarker, the lady physician; and in hundreds of other Christian women in equal or humbler ranks of life. How many times we

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have thanked God for their lives, counted their friendship sweet, and their fellowship in the gospel, blessed; and, may we add, almost envied their possibilities for usefulness in India?

We know of no women in the world who have the "open door" set before them for usefulness as the Christian women in India have today. Do they realize it, and are they willing to meet it? If the recital of these wrongs has made them realize more deeply what Christ has done for them, and shall lead them to yield themselves to God, that so far as in them lies, every woman in India shall hear the gospel; we shall be satisfied. Is it possible for the one hundred and fifty million women of India *of this generation* to hear the gospel? We leave the Christian women of India, England and America to answer the question.

THE END

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Index

ADULTERY, Fashionable, 291.
Age of consent, 36, 230.
Age for Marriage, Maximum, 39.
American Board High School, 267.
Amherst, Lord, 191.
Anti-Nautch movement, 137–147.
Arbitrary divorce, 96.

BENTINCK, Lord Wm., 50, 192, 214.
Besant, Mrs. Annie, 173, 235, 236, 237–240.
Bethune, Hon. D., 258.
Bethune Institution, 258, 264.
Bhandarkar, Dr., quoted, 172.
Bhavins, The, 124.
Bible, The, on Widowhood, 48, 49, 50.
Bielby, Miss, 207, 208.
" " on the Zenana, 98.
" " visits the Queen, 209.
Bishop, Mrs. Isabella B., 95.
Bradford, Rev. A. H., quoted, 114.
Brittian, Miss, 260.

CALCUTTA School Society, 256.
Cardinal Manning, quoted, 39.
Carpenter, Miss, 262.
Carey, William, 250.
Carey and Infanticide, 151.
Carey's sign, 251.
Carey, Work of, 252–254.
Caste, Power of, 64.
" Evil of, 285.
Chaitanya Sect, The, 121.
Chentsalrao, Hon. P., quoted, 61.
Child Marriage, 33, 174, 201, 202.
Child wife, Hardships of a, 43.
Child widow, A, 59.
" " Sufferings of, 59.
" " and famine, 171.
Christianity, Introduction of, 247–249.
Christianity, Need of, 245.
" the real remedy, 293.
Christianity, Power of illustrated, 294.
Civilization, Influence of, 290.
Close Carriage, A, 76.
Cold Suttee, 53.
College Degrees for women, 264, 265, 268.
Conjugal Rights, Restitution of, 204, 205.

Digitized by Google

Index

Consent, Age of, 36.
Converted Hindu women, 294, 295.
Cooke, Miss, 256.
Cruel punishments, 43.
Custom, Power of, 27, 163.

DEVADASIS, The, 112–125.
" Character of, 119, 120.
Difficulty, The real, 270, 283.
Divorce, Arbitrary, 96.
" Checks to, 97.
" Law of, 42.
" Thirteen kinds of, 96.
Duboise, Abbe, quoted, 277, 281.
Duff, Dr., quoted, 215, 261.
Duncan, Jonathan, 156.
" " his monument, 157.

EAST INDIA COMPANY, The, 175, 176, 179.
Education, Female, 210.
" Western, 234.
Enforced widowhood, 48, 167.

FAMINE OF 1898, 233.
Famine, Child widows and, 171.
Female education, 210.
Fordyce, Rev. J., 259.

GANGA SAGAR, Festival at, 152.
Ganga Sagar, Infanticide at, 189.
Gospel, Need of the, 290.
Gospel, and woman, 292.
Government, The position of, 175, 178.
Gunpati Festival, The, 233.

HAREM, The, 77.
Hastings, Lady, 257.
Hewlett, Miss, quoted, 87.
Hindu home life, 26.
" houses, 91.
" sects, 89.
" shastras, The, 116.
" Social Reform Association, 138, 202.
Hindu Social Reform Association, Memorial of, 139, 140.
Hindu Social Reform Association, Memorial of reply to, 141.
Hindu Temples, form of, 112.
" " uses of, 112–114.
Hindu widows, Number of, 61.
Home, Immorality in the, 58.
Hope, A ray of, 18.
Hunter, Sir W. W., quoted, 180, 182, 194.

IMMORALITY in the home, 58.
India, Modern, 23.
Indian Mutiny, The 176.
Indian Social Reformer, The, quoted, 116, 126, 132, 142, 143, 164, 167, 173.
Indian Spectator, The, quoted, 195.

Digitized by Google

Index

Indian Testimony, A chapter of, 161–174.
Indian Witness, The, quoted 161, 197, 236, 289.
Indian Universities, 206.
" " Women in, 207.
Infanticide, 58, 148.
" abolished, 153.
" Act of 1890, 159.
" in Bible times, 149.
" Carey on, 151, 189.
" Christianity opposed to, 150.
Infanticide, Dr. Wilson on, 150.
" declared illegal, 152.
" Wholesale, 160.

JAGANNATH, Temple of, 115.
Jarejas, The, 156.
Jejuri, Temple at, 102, 104.
Jogtins, The, 125.
Juggernaut, 115.

KASHMARI pandit, A, quoted, 88, 89.
Keshub, Chunder Sen, 217–221, 288.
Khandoba's sword, Marriage to, 100.
Koran and Polygamy, The, 61.
" " the Veil, The, 77.
Krishna, 120.

LEGISLATION desired, 186, 187.
Lucknow Advocate, The, 164.
Lucknow College, 263.
Lucknow, Nautch-girls of, 131.

MADRAS Marriage Bill, The, 231.
Madras Reform Association, 165.
Mahomet's daughter, Story of, 271.
Malabari, Mr., quoted, 64, 163, 174, 195, 198.
Malabari, Mr., Reforms by, 221–224.
Malabari, Famous "Notes" of, 225.
Manning, Cardinal, quoted, 39.
Mansell, Mrs., 196, 197, 254, 255.
Manu, Laws of, 272.
Marriage, Fixing age for, 174.
" Maximum age for, 39.
" A mere show, 34.
Marshman, Mrs. H., 255.
Maximum age for marriage, 39.
Missions, Protestant, 249.
" Roman Catholic, 248, 249.
Missionaries, do they exaggerate? 161.
Modern India, 23.
Mohammed, Story of, 78–80.
" Institutes the Veil, 80, 81.
Mohammed, Wives of, 81.
Mohammedan sects, 90.
Morals, Double standard of, 144.
Muir, Sir W., quoted, 88, 92.
Müller, Max, Testimony of, 165, 166.
Muralis, The, 100–111.

Digitized by Google

Index

Muralis, Character of, 104.
" Missionaries of, 108.
" Vows of, 106.
Murdoch, Dr., quoted, 87, 116, 117, 119, 132, 291.
Mutiny, The Indian, 176.
Mysore Marriage Bill, The, 231.
Mysore, State of, 200.

NATIONAL Social Congress, The, 203, 204.
Nautch-girls, The, 126–136.
" Antiquity of, 126.
" Character of, 134.
" Earnings of, 131.
" Education of, 128, 129.
Nautch-girls, Training of, 127, 128.
Nautch-girls at government dinners, 135.
Nautch-girls at weddings, 134.
" and ballet dancers, 145.
Nepaul, State of, 200.
Normal School, The India, 260.

OBSCENE books, Use of, 115.
" paintings, 116.

PATRIARCHAL system, The, 47.
Phulmani Dasi, 19, 196, 227.
Plague of 1898, The, 233.
Polygamy allowed by the Koran, 61, 93.
Polygamy, Evils of, 94, 290.
Prayaschitt, The, 31.
Preface, 15.
Prostitution of temple girls, 122.
Protestant missions, 249.
Punishments, Cruel, 43.
Purdah Lady, A, 77.
Puree, Temple of, 114.
Purity associations, 137.

QUEEN EMPRESS, Memorial to, 197, 198.

RADHA KRISHNA, 154.
Ragnathdas, Case of, 120.
Ragunathrio, Mr., quoted, 55, 56, 65.
Rajput infanticide, 170, 171.
Rakhmabai, Case of, 39, 41, 204.
Ramabai, Introduction by, 11.
" quoted, 21, 53, 54, 68, 162, 273.
Ram Mohun Roy, 212, 213, 285, 286.
Ram Mohun Roy visits England, 214.
Ranade, Justice, 187, 188.
Rao Bahadur, Case of, 65–67, 69, 227.
Rao, Mr. K. S., Statement of, 170, 171.
Real Difficulty, The, 270–283.
Real Remedy, The, 284–295.
Recent Reforms, 229–246.
Reformers, Methods of, 243, 244.
Robertson, Rev. F. W., 291.
Roman Catholic missions, 248, 249.

Digitized by Google

Index

SANDHURST, LORD, 232.
Sarah Tucker College, 263.
Schools for Girls, 265, 266.
Schwartz, 250.
Sects, Hindu, 89.
" Mohammedan, 90.
Sen, Keshub Chunder, 217–221.
Seventy million devils, 111.
Shastras, The Hindu, 273.
Shaving the head, 54, 56–58, 71–73.
Since 1891, 229–246.
Social Conference, Action of, 137, 138.
Social Congress, The, 67, 68, 245.
Stead, Mr., 195.
Stridhan, The widow's, 63.
Suttee Act, The, 135, 190, 193.
" Rite, The, 50, 53.
" " Petition in favor of, 53.
Suttee Rite, Ramabai on, 53.
Swain, Miss Clara, 207.
Sword, Married to a, 100, 102–104.

TAGORE, S. N., on child marriage, 174.
Tani, Trial of, 168.
Temple boys, 107.
Temple girls, Prostitution of, 122.
Temple worship, 114.
Temples, Form of, 112.
" Uses of, 112–114.
Thoburn, Miss, quoted, 82, 162, 263, 264.
Thomas, The Apostle, 247.
Tilak, Mr., 233.
Times, The, quoted, 131.

UNIVERSITIES, The Indian, 206.
" Women in, 206.

VEDAS, The, 272.
Veil, Koran and the, 77.
Vevekanand, Swami, 173, 236.
Viceroy's reply to memorial, 140–142.
Victoria proclaimed Empress, 176.
Victoria, Proclamation by, 177.
Victoria High School, The, 266.
Vidiasgar, I. C., 215–217.

WARREN HASTINGS, 175.
W. C. T. U., Memorial of, 196.
Wellesley, Lord, 191.
What government has done, 189–210.
What missionaries have done, 247–269.
What reformers have done, 211–228.
Widows, Dress of, 73.
" Number of, 61, 182.
Widow's Stridhan, The, 63.
Widow Remarriage Act, 63.
Widow remarriages, Number of, 67.

Digitized by Google

Index

Widowhood, Bible on, 48, 49, 50.
Widowhood, Enforced, 48.
" Remedies for, 62.
Williams, Sir Monier, 211, 212, 282, 283.
Wilson, Dr., quoted, 150, 155, 274–277.
ZENANA, The, 36, 76–99, 78.
" Evils of, 84–87.
Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, 249.

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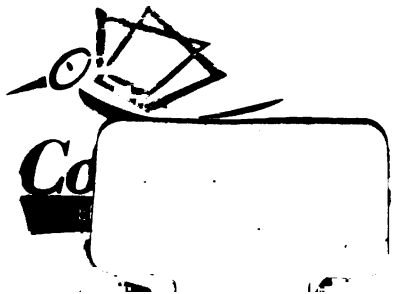

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